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THE BOOK OF POETRY

BRITISH POETS

PAGES 1515-1882

THE BOOK OF POETRY

Collected from the Whole Field
of British and American Poetry.
Also Translations of Important
Poems from Foreign Languages.

Selected and Annotated
with an Introduction by
EDWIN MARKHAM

*Poetry fettered,
fetters the human race.
—William Blake.*

VOLUME VI

WM. H. WISE & Co.

NEW YORK

1927

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BRITISH POETS

FROM 1784

TO 1809

COLLEGE
ALLAN CUNNINGHAM

SCOTLAND, 1784-1842

A Wet Sheet and a Flowing Sea

A WET sheet and a flowing sea,
A wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast—
And bends the gallant mast, my boys,
While, like the eagle free,
Away the good ship flies, and leaves
Old England on the lee.

"O for a soft and gentle mind!"
I heard a fair one cry;
But give to me the snoring breeze
And white waves heaving high—
And white waves heaving high, my boys,
The good ship tight and free;
The world of waters is our home,
And merry men are we.

There's tempest in yon hornèd moon,
And lightning in yon cloud;
And hark the music, mariners!
The wind is piping loud—
The wind is piping loud, my boys,
The lightning flashing free;
While the hollow oak our palace is,
Our heritage the sea.

The Spring of the Year

GONE were but the winter cold,
And gone were but the snow,
I could sleep in the wild woods
Where primroses blow.

Cold's the snow at my head,
And cold at my feet;
And the finger of death's at my e'en,
Closing them to sleep.

Let none tell my father
Or my mother so dear:
I'll meet them both in heaven
At the spring of the year.

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

ENGLAND, 1785-1866

ARTHUR SYMONS says: "Peacock's learned wit, his satire upon the vulgarity of progress, are more continuously present in his prose than in his verse. * * * They are like no other verse: they are startling, grotesque, full of hearty extravagances, at times thrilling with unexpected beauty. The masterpiece, perhaps, * * * is *The War-Song of Dinas Vawr*, which is, as the author says in due commendation of it, 'the quintessence of all war-songs that ever were written, and the sum and substance of all the tendencies and consequences of the military.' * * * Was comic verse ever more august?" And did the tooth of satire ever bite more deeply into the horror of war?

The War-Song of Dinas Vawr

THE mountain sheep are sweeter,
But the valley sheep are fatter;
We therefore deemed it meeter
To carry off the latter.
We made an expedition;
We met an host and quelled it;
We forced a strong position,
And killed the men who held it.

On Dyfed's richest valley,
Where herds of kine were browsing,
We made a mighty sally,
To furnish our carousing.
Fierce warriors rushed to meet us;
We met them and o'erthrew them:
They struggled hard to beat us,
But we conquered them, and slew them.

As we drove our prize at leisure,
The king marched forth to catch us:
His rage surpassed all measure,
But his people could not match us.
He fled to his hall-pillars;
And, ere our force we led off,
Some sacked his house and cellars,
While others cut his head off.

We there, in strife bewildering,
Spilt blood enough to swim in:
We orphaned many children
And widowed many women.
The eagles and the ravens

THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

We glutted with our foemen—
The heroes and the cravens,
The spearmen and the bowmen.

We brought away from battle,
And much their land bemoaned them,
Two thousand head of cattle
And the head of him who owned them.
Ednyfed, King of Dyfed,
His head was borne before us;
His wine and beasts supplied our feasts,
And his overthrow, our chorus.

The Grave of Love

I DUG, beneath the cypress shade,
What well might seem an elfin's grave;
And every pledge in earth I laid,
That erst thy false affection gave.

I pressed them down the sod beneath;
I placed one mossy stone above;
And twined the rose's fading wreath
Around the sepulchre of love.

Frail as thy love, the flowers were dead
Ere yet the evening sun was set:
But years shall see the cypress spread,
Immutable as my regret.

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

ENGLAND, 1787-1855

Rienzi to the Romans

FRIENDS!

I come not here to talk. Ye know too well
The story of our thralldom. We are slaves!
The bright sun rises to his course, and lights
A race of slaves! he sets, and his last beam
Falls on a slave! Not such as, swept along
By the full tide of power, the conqueror leads
To crimson glory and undying fame,
But base, ignoble slaves!—slaves to a horde
Of petty tyrants, feudal despots; lords
Rich in some dozen paltry villages,
Strong in some hundred spearmen, only great
In that strange spell—a name! Each hour, dark fraud,
Or open rapine, or protected murder,
Cries out against them. But this very day
An honest man, my neighbor—there he stands—
Was struck—struck like a dog—by one who wore
The badge of Ursini! because, forsooth,
He tossed not high his ready cap in air,
Nor lifted up his voice in servile shouts,
At sight of that great ruffian! Be we men,
And suffer such dishonor? men, and wash not
The stain away in blood? Such shames are common.
I have known deeper wrongs. I, that speak to ye—
I had a brother once, a gracious boy,
Full of all gentleness, of calmest hope,
Of sweet and quiet joy; there was the look
Of Heaven upon his face which limners give
To the beloved disciple. How I loved

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD

That gracious boy! younger by fifteen years,
Brother at once and son! He left my side—
A summer bloom on his fair cheeks, a smile
Parting his innocent lips. In one short hour
The pretty, harmless boy was slain! I saw
The corse, the mangled corse, and then I cried
For vengeance! Rouse ye, Romans! Rouse ye, slaves!
Have ye brave sons?—Look in the next fierce brawl
To see them die! Have ye fair daughters?—Look
To see them live, torn from your arms, distained,
Dishonored; and, if ye dare call for justice,
Be answered by the lash! Yet this is Rome,
That sat on her seven hills, and from her throne
Of beauty ruled the world! Yet we are Romans!
Why, in that elder day, to be a Roman
Was greater than a king! And once again—
Hear me, ye walls, that echoed to the tread
Of either Brutus!—once again, I swear,
The eternal city shall be free!

“BARRY CORNWALL” (BRYAN WALLER PROCTOR)

ENGLAND, 1787-1874

The Blood Horse

GAMARRA is a dainty steed,
Strong, black, and of a noble breed,
Full of fire, and full of bone,
With all his line of fathers known;
Fine his nose, his nostrils thin,
But blown abroad by the pride within!
His mane is like a river flowing,

BARRY CORNWALL

And his eyes like embers glowing
In the darkness of the night,
And his pace as swift as light.

Look—how round his straining throat
Grace and shifting beauty float;
Sinewy strength is in his reins,
And the red blood gallops through his veins;
Richer, redder, never ran
Through the boasting heart of man.
He can trace his lineage higher
Than the Bourbon dare aspire—
Douglas, Guzman, or the Guelph,
Or O'Brien's blood itself!

He, who hath no peer, was born
Here, upon a red March morn;
But his famous fathers dead
Were Arabs all, and Arab-bred,
And the last of that great line
Trod like one of a race divine!
And yet, he was but friend to one,
Who fed him at the set of sun
By some lone fountain fringed with green;
With him, a roving Bedouin,
He lived (none else would he obey
Through all the hot Arabian day)
And died untamed upon the sands
Where Balkh amidst the desert stands!

A Petition to Time

This lyric was written on the poet's arrival in America. It touched the heart of the people, and the newspapers carried it to all firesides.

TOUCH us gently, Time!
Let us glide adown thy stream
Gently—as we sometimes glide
Through a quiet dream!
Humble voyagers are We,
Husband, wife and children three—
(One is lost—an angel, fled
To the azure overhead!)

Touch us gently, Time!
We've not proud nor soaring wings;
Our ambition, our content
Lies in simple things.
Humble voyagers are We,
O'er Life's dim unsounded sea,
Seeking only some calm clime:
Touch us gently, gentle Time!

The Owl

IN the hollow tree, in the old gray tower,
The spectral owl doth dwell;
Dull, hated, despised, in the sunshine hour,
But at dusk he's abroad and well!
Not a bird of the forest e'er mates with him;
All mock him outright by day;
But at night, when the woods grow still and dim,
The boldest will shrink away!

BARRY CORNWALL

*O, when the night falls, and roosts the fowl,
Then, then, is the reign of the hornèd owl!*

And the owl hath a bride, who is fond and bold,
And loveth the wood's deep gloom;
And, with eyes like the shine of the moonstone cold,
She awaiteth her ghastly groom:
Not a feather she moves, not a carol she sings,
As she waits in her tree so still;
But when her heart heareth his flapping wings,
She hoots out her welcome shrill!

*O, when the moon shines, and dogs do howl,
Then, then, is the joy of the hornèd owl!*

Mourn not for the owl, nor his gloomy plight!
The owl hath his share of good:
If a prisoner he be in the broad daylight,
He is lord in the dark greenwood!
Nor lonely the bird, nor his ghastly mate,
They are each unto each a pride:
Thrice fonder, perhaps, since a strange, dark fate
Hath rent them from all beside!

*So when the night falls, and dogs do howl,
Sing, ho! for the reign of the hornèd owl!*

*We know not alway
Who are kings by day,
But the king of the night is the bold brown owl!*

GEORGE GORDON BYRON, LORD BYRON

ENGLAND, 1788-1824

SOME early verses which Byron published in 1806 were suppressed. They were followed in 1807 by *Hours of Idleness*, which was savagely attacked by the *Edinburgh Review*. His reply was the *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a masterpiece of satirical nomenclature. At this time, Byron left England, and during an absence of two years wrote the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, which were published in 1812 and were received with acclamation. In his own words, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. This poem, here and there ablaze with Nature—her storms, her shadows, her serenities; and the sentiment, now morbid, now jubilant—is always his own, though it beguiles with honeyed passages or stabs like a knife. His *Don Juan*, the first two cantos of which have been described as his masterpiece, followed in 1819 and was hailed with mingled abuse and acclaim. It has questionable passages: he sometimes enspheres a villain in a blaze of diction.

As a boy I was, like Tennyson, an enormous admirer of Byron. Tennyson says: "I was fourteen when I heard of his death. It seemed an awful calamity; I remember I rushed out of doors, sat down by myself, shouted aloud, and wrote on the standstone: '*Byron is dead!*'"

Byron's final position in English literature is not yet wholly settled. His fame was at its apex in his own generation. Yet his energy, passion, and power of vivid, richly-colored description, together with the interest attaching to his romantic career, must always make him loom large among English writers.

Taine tells us that "Byron does not invent, he observes; he does not create, he transcribes." His poetry is the exposition of his own sorrows, his own revolts, his own

LORD BYRON

dreams. Thus it can be said that he projected over Europe "the pageant of his bleeding heart."

Life was to him fever and torture: he knew "the worm, the canker and the grief." He was a stormy spirit—all originality and volcanic energy—a tumultuous genius, not so much a poet of the individual as a poet of the universe. And all his stormy passion is voiced in a style that is free, intense, affluent, dynamic, melodious.

Browning and Carlyle were of the same mind in predicting that Byron would have been a poet of the noblest and highest order had he lived a few years longer. As it is, his poetry reveals an unbridled satirist and a man of sentiment, an aristocrat and a radical, an exponent of sublimity and sensuality—"half dust, half deity"—to use his own phrase. The key to his eccentricities is to be found in his heredity, his disordered life, his headlong passions.

But he also had nobilities in him. The Italian patriot Mazzini bears this testimony: "The day will come when Democracy will remember all that it owes to Byron. . . . From him dates the sympathy of all the true-hearted amongst us for this land of liberty, whose true vocation he so worthily represented among the oppressed."

When We Two Parted

WHEN we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

LORD BYRON

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well:
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met—
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?
With silence and tears.

Man's Love

FROM "DON JUAN"

MAN'S love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence; man may range
The court, camp, church, the vessel, and the mart;
Sword, gown, gain, glory, offer in exchange
Pride, fame, ambition, to fill up his heart,
And few there are whom these cannot estrange;
Men have all these resources, we but one,
To love again, and be again undone.

The Love of Women

FROM "DON JUAN"

ALAS! the love of women! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them but mockeries of the past alone,
And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real
Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel.

They are right; for man, to man so oft unjust,
Is always so to women; one sole bond
Awaits them, treachery is all their trust;
Taught to conceal, their bursting hearts despond
Over their idol, till some wealthier lust
Buys them in marriage—and what rests beyond?
A thankless husband, next a faithless lover,
Then dressing, nursing, praying, and all's over.

LORD BYRON

John Keats

FROM "DON JUAN"

The entirely false idea that Keats fell into a decline and died as a result of the severe criticism on his "Endymion" in the "Quarterly Review", was shared by Shelley and Byron, and was generally prevalent until the publication of Milnes' "Life of Keats."

JOHN KEATS, who was killed off by one critique,
Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek
Contrived to talk about the Gods of late,
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate;
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article.

From "The Isles of Greece"

FROM "DON JUAN"

THE isles of Greece! the isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

The Scian and the Teian muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse:
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."

LORD BYRON

The mountains look on Marathon—

And Marathon looks on the sea;

And musing there an hour alone,

I dreamed that Greece might still be free;

For standing on the Persians' grave,

I could not deem myself a slave.

A king sate on the rocky brow

Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis;

And ships, by thousands, lay below,

And men in nations—all were his!

He counted them at break of day—

And when the sun set, where were they?

And where are they? and where art thou,

My country? On thy voiceless shore

The heroic lay is tuneless now—

The heroic bosom beats no more!

And must thy lyre, so long divine,

Degenerate into hands like mine?

'Tis something in the dearth of fame,

Though linked among a fettered race,

To feel at least a patriot's shame,

Even as I sing, suffuse my face;

For what is left the poet here?

For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?

Must *we* but blush? Our fathers bled.

Earth! render back from out thy breast

A remnant of our Spartan dead!

Of the three hundred grant but three,

To make a new Thermopylæ!

LORD BYRON

What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, "Let one living head,
But one, arise—we come, we come!"
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

The Destruction of Sennacherib

THE Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew
still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

LORD BYRON

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

Chillon

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless mind!
Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art;
For there thy habitation is the heart,
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned,
To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
And thy sad floor an altar, for 'twas trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
Worn as if thy cold pavements were a sod,
By Bonnivard! May none those marks efface,
For they appeal from tyranny to God.

Oh! Snatched Away in Beauty's Bloom

OH, snatched away in beauty's bloom!
On thee shall press no ponderous tomb!
But on thy turf shall roses rear
Their leaves, the earliest of the year,

And the wild cypress wave in tender gloom;
 And oft by yon blue gushing stream
 Shall Sorrow lean her drooping head,
 And feed deep thought with many a dream,
 And lingering pause and lightly tread;
 Fond wretch! as if her step disturbed the dead!

Away! we know that tears are vain,
 That Death nor heeds nor hears distress:
 Will this unteach us to complain?
 Or make one mourner weep the less?
 And thou, who tell'st me to forget,
 Thy looks are wan, thine eyes are wet.

Stanzas to Augusta

This poem should rank high in the Byronic reliquary. Poe appraises it justly: "Although the rhythm here is one of the most difficult, the versification could scarcely be improved. No nobler theme ever engaged the pen of poet. It is the soul-elevating idea that no man can consider himself entitled to complain of Fate while, in his adversity, he still retains the unwavering love of woman."

THOUGH the day of my destiny's over,
 And the star of my fate hath declined,
 Thy soft heart refused to discover
 The faults which so many could find.
 Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
 It shrunk not to share it with me,
 And the love which my spirit hath painted
 It never hath found but in thee.

Then when nature around me is smiling,
 The last smile which answers to mine,

LORD BYRON

I do not believe it beguiling,
Because it reminds me of thine;
And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If their billows excite an emotion,
It is that they bear me from thee.

Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave;
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To pain—it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me:
They may crush, but they shall not condemn—
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
'Tis of thee that I think—not of them.

Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake;
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me;
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake;
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me;
Though parted, it was not to fly;
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,
Nor mute, that the world might belie.

Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,
Nor the war of the many with one—
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'Twas folly not sooner to shun;
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of thee.

LORD BYRON

From the wreck of the past which hath perished
Thus much I at least may recall:
It hath taught me that what I most cherished
Deserved to be dearest of all.
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wild waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of thee.

From "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers"

In 1809, Byron published this famous satire, which ran through many editions. In 1816, he had the high-mindedness to disavow his belittlement of such men as Coleridge and Wordsworth, saying he regretted that he was not able to consign "this miserable record of misplaced anger and indiscriminate acrimony to the flames." I give you a taste of the satire.

PREPARE for rhyme—I'll publish, right or wrong:
Fools are my theme, let satire be my song.

A man must serve his time to every trade
Save censure—critics all are ready-made.
Take hackneyed jokes from Miller, got by rote,
With just enough of learning to misquote.

With eagle pinion soaring to the skies,
Behold the ballad-monger Southey rise!
To him let Camoëns, Milton, Tasso yield,
Whose annual strains, like armies, take the field.
First in the ranks see Joan of Arc advance,

LORD BYRON

The scourge of England and the boast of France!
The burnt by wicked Bedford for a witch,
Behold her statue placed in glory's niche:
Her fetters burst, and just released from prison,
A virgin phoenix from her ashes risen.
Next see tremendous Thalaba come on,
Arabia's monstrous, wild and wondrous son;
Domdaniel's dread destroyer, who o'erthrew
More mad magicians than the world e'er knew.
Immortal hero! all thy foes o'ercome,
For ever reign—the rival of Tom Thumb!

There be, who say, in these enlightened days,
That splendid lies are all the poet's praise;
That strained invention, ever on the wing,
Alone impels the modern bard to sing:
'Tis true, that all who rhyme—nay, all who write,
Shrink from that fatal word to genius—trite;
Yet Truth sometimes will lend her noblest fires
And decorate the verse herself inspires:
This fact in Virtue's name let Crabbe attest;
Thou nature's sternest painter, yet the best.

The Coliseum

FROM "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE"

ARCHES on arches! as it were that Rome,
Collecting the chief trophies of her line,
Would build up all her triumphs in one dome,
Her Coliseum stands; the moonbeams shine
As 'twere its natural torches, for divine
Should be the light which streams here to illumine
This long-explored but still exhaustless mine

LORD BYRON

Of contemplation; and the azure gloom
Of an Italian night, where the deep skies assume

Hues which have words, and speak to ye of heaven,
Floats o'er this vast and wondrous monument,
And shadows forth its glory. There is given
Unto the things of earth, which Time hath bent,
A spirit's feeling, and where he hath leant
His hand, but broke his scythe, there is a power
And magic in the ruined battlement,
For which the palace of the present hour
Must yield its pomp, and wait till ages are its dower.

And here the buzz of eager nations ran,
In murmured pity, or loud-roared applause,
As man was slaughtered by his fellowman.
And wherefore slaughtered? wherefore, but because
Such were the bloody Circus' genial laws,
And the imperial pleasure. Wherefore not?
What matters where we fall to fill the maws
Of worms—on battle-plains or listed spot?
Both are but theatres where the chief actors rot.

I see before me the Gladiator lie:
He leans upon his hand—his manly brow
Consents to death, but conquers agony,
And his drooped head sinks gradually low—
And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow
From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,
Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now
The arena swims around him—he is gone,
Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch
who won.

LORD BYRON

He heard it, but he heeded not—his eyes
Were with his heart, and that was far away;
He recked not of the life he lost nor prize,
But where his rude hut by the Danube lay:
There were his young barbarians all at play,
There was their Dacian mother—he, their sire,
Butchered to make a Roman holiday.
All this rushed with his blood. Shall he expire
And unavenged? Arise! ye Goths, and glut your ire!

The Ocean

FROM "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE"

ROLL on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore—upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
A shadow of man's ravage, save his own,
When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
Without a grave, unknelled, uncoffined, and unknown.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
Their clay creator the vain title take
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war;
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

LORD BYRON

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?
Thy waters washed them power while they were free,
And many a tyrant since; their shores obey
The stranger, slave, or savage; their decay
Has dried up realms to deserts—not so thou,
Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play—
Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow—
Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form
Glasses itself in tempests; in all time,
Calm or convulsed—in breeze, or gale, or storm,
Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime
Dark-heaving—boundless, endless, and sublime—
The image of Eternity—the throne
Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime
The monsters of the deep are made; each zone
Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

The Eve of Waterloo

FROM "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE"

THERE was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her beauty and her chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men:
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage-bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

LORD BYRON

Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when youth and pleasure meet
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet. . . .

But hark!—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;

And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!
Arm! arm! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness;
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated: who could guess

If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise?

And there was mounting in hot haste; the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,

And swiftly forming in the ranks of war;

And the deep thunder peal on peal afar,

And near, the beat of the alarming drum

Roused up the soldier ere the morning star;

While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering with white lips—"The foe! They come!
they come!"

And Ardennes waves above them her green leaves,
Dewy with nature's tear-drops, as they pass,

LORD BYRON

Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass,
Which now beneath them, but above shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living valor, rolling on the foe
And burning with high hope, shall molder cold and low.

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn, the marshalling in arms—the day,
Battle's magnificently stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent,
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse, friend, foe, in one red burial blent.

From "Manfred"

THE stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful!
I linger yet with Nature, for the night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learned the language of another world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering—upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;

LORD BYRON

The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watch-dog bayed beyond the Tiber; and
More near from out the Cæsar's palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Began and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appeared to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot. Where the Cæsars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst
A grove which springs through levelled battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;
But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection!
While Cæsar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which softened down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and filled up,
As 'twere anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old!—
The dead but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.

My Boat Is on the Shore

MY boat is on the shore,
And my bark is on the sea:
But, before I go, Tom Moore,
Here's a double health to thee!

Here's a sigh to those that love me,
And a smile to those who hate;
And, whatever sky's above me,
Here's a heart for every fate.

Though the ocean roar around me,
Yet it shall yet bear me on;
Though a desert should surround me,
It hath springs that may be won.

Were't the last drop in the well,
As I gasped upon the brink,
Ere my fainting spirit fell,
'Tis to thee that I would drink.

With that water as this wine,
The libation I would pour
Should be: "Peace with thine and mine,
And a health to thee, Tom Moore!"

The Dream

Here we have Byron's story of his impassioned but tragic affection for Mary Chaworth. It has in it the wild heart of the poet at one of his noblest moments.

*Poe reminds us of a beautiful fact: "In every allusion made by Byron to his passion for Mary Chaworth, there was a vein of almost spiritual tenderness and purity, strangely in contrast with the gross earthliness pervading and disfiguring his ordinary love poems. 'The Dream' * * * has never been excelled (certainly never excelled by him) in the blended fervor, delicacy, truthfulness and utter ethereality which sublimates and adorn it."*

And I may say that this powerful poem laid a strange enchantment upon all my romantic boyhood.

OUR life is twofold; sleep hath its own world,
 A boundary between the things misnamed
 Death and existence: sleep hath its own world,
 And a wide realm of wild reality,
 And dreams in their development have breath,
 And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;
 They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
 They take a weight from off our waking toils,
 They do divide our being; they become
 A portion of ourselves as of our time,
 And look like heralds of eternity;
 They pass like spirits of the past—they speak
 Like sibyls of the future; they have power—
 The tyranny of pleasure and of pain;
 They make us what we were not—what they will,
 And shake us with the vision that's gone by,
 The dread of vanished shadows. Are they so?
 Is not the past all shadow? What are they?
 Creations of the mind? The mind can make

LORD BYRON

Substances, and people planets of its own
With beings brighter than have been, and give
A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.
I would recall a vision which I dreamed
Perchance in sleep—for in itself a thought,
A slumbering thought, is capable of years,
And curdles a long life into one hour.

I saw two beings in the hues of youth
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill,
Green and of a mild declivity, the last
As 'twere the cape of a long ridge of such,
Save that there was no sea to lave its base,
But a most living landscape, and the wave
Of woods and cornfields, and the abodes of men
Scattered at intervals, and wreathing smoke
Arising from such rustic roofs; the hill
Was crowned with a peculiar diadem
Of trees, in circular array, so fixed,
Not by the sport of nature, but of man:
These two, a maiden and a youth, were there
Gazing—the one on all that was beneath
Fair as herself—but the boy gazed on her;
And both were young, and one was beautiful;
And both were young—yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge,
The maid was on the eve of womanhood;
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years, and to his eye
There was but one beloved face on earth,
And that was shining on him; he had looked
Upon it till it could not pass away;
He had no breath, no being, but in hers;
She was his voice; he did not speak to her,
But trembled on her words; she was his sight,

LORD BYRON

For his eye followed hers, and saw with hers,
Which colored all his objects; he had ceased
To live within himself: she was his life,
The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
Which terminated all; upon a tone,
A touch of hers, his blood would ebb and flow,
And his cheek change tempestuously—his heart
Unknowing of its cause of agony.
But she in these fond feelings had no share:
Her sighs were not for him; to her he was
Even as a brother—but no more: 'twas much,
For brotherless she was, save in the name
Her infant friendship had bestowed on him;
Herself the solitary scion left
Of a time-honored race. It was a name
Which pleased him, and yet pleased him not—and why?
Time taught him a deep answer—when she loved
Another; even *now* she loved another,
And on the summit of that hill she stood,
Looking afar if yet her lover's steed
Kept pace with her expectancy, and flew.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
There was an ancient mansion, and before
Its walls there was a steed caparisoned;
Within an antique oratory stood
The boy of whom I spake; he was alone,
And pale, and pacing to and fro: anon
He sate him down, and seized a pen, and traced
Words which I could not guess of; then he leaned
His bowed head on his hands and shook, as 'twere
With a convulsion—then arose again,
And with his teeth and quivering hands did tear
What he had written, but he shed no tears,
And he did calm himself, and fix his brow

LORD BYRON

Into a kind of quiet; as he paused,
The lady of his love re-entered there;
She was serene and smiling then, and yet
She knew she was by him beloved; she knew—
For quickly comes such knowledge—that his heart
Was darkened with her shadow, and she saw
That he was wretched, but she saw not all.
He rose, and with a cold and gentle grasp
He took her hand; a moment o'er his face
A tablet of unutterable thoughts
Was traced, and then it faded, as it came;
He dropped the hand he held, and with slow steps
Retired, but not as bidding her adieu,
For they did part with mutual smiles; he passed
From out the massy gate of that old Hall,
And mounting on his steed he went his way;
And ne'er repassed that hoary threshold more.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The boy was sprung to manhood; in the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home,
And his soul drank their sunbeams; he was girt
With strange and dusky aspects; he was not
Himself like what he had been; on the sea
And on the shore he was a wanderer;
There was a mass of many images
Crowded like waves upon me, but he was
A part of all; and in the last he lay
Reposing from the noontide sultriness,
Couched among fallen columns, in the shade
Of ruined walls that had survived the names
Of those who reared them; by his sleeping side
Stood camels grazing, and some goodly steeds
Were fastened near a fountain; and a man,
Clad in a flowing garb, did watch the while,

LORD BYRON

While many of his tribe slumbered around:
And they were canopied by the blue sky,
So cloudless, clear, and purely beautiful,
That God alone was to be seen in heaven.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The lady of his love was wed with one
Who did not love her better: in her home,
A thousand leagues from his, her native home,
She dwelt, begirt with growing infancy,
Daughters and sons of beauty—but behold!
Upon her face there was the tint of grief,
The settled shadow of an inward strife,
And an unquiet drooping of the eye,
As if its lid were charged with unshed tears.
What could her grief be? She had all she loved,
And he who had so loved her was not there
To trouble with bad hopes, or evil wish,
Or ill-repressed affliction, her pure thoughts.
What could her grief be? She had loved him not,
Nor given him cause to deem himself beloved,
Nor could he be a part of that which preyed
Upon her mind—a specter of the past.

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The wanderer was returned. I saw him stand
Before an altar—with a gentle bride;
Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The starlight of his boyhood—as he stood
Even at the altar, o'er his brow there came
The selfsame aspect and the quivering shock
That in the antique oratory shook
His bosom in its solitude; and then—
As in that hour—a moment o'er his face
The tablet of unutterable thoughts

LORD BYRON

Was traced—and then it faded as it came,
And he stood calm and quiet, and he spoke
The fitting vows, but heard not his own words,
And all things reeled around him; he could see
Not that which was, nor that which should have been,
But the old mansion, and the accustomed hall,
And the remembered chambers, and the place,
The day, the hour, the sunshine, and the shade,
All things pertaining to that place and hour,
And her who was his destiny, came back
And thrust themselves between him and the light;
What business had they there at such a time?

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The lady of his love—oh, she was changed,
As by the sickness of the soul! her mind
Had wandered from its dwelling, and her eyes,
They had not their own luster, but the look
Which is not of the earth; she was become
The queen of a fantastic realm; her thoughts
Were combinations of disjointed things,
And forms impalpable and unperceived
Of others' sight familiar were to hers.
And this the world calls frenzy; but the wise
Have a far deeper madness, and the glance
Of melancholy is a fearful gift;
What is it but the telescope of truth,
Which strips the distance of its fantasies,
And brings life near in utter nakedness,
Making the cold reality too real!

A change came o'er the spirit of my dream.
The wanderer was alone as heretofore,
The beings which surrounded him were gone,
Or were at war with him; he was a mark

LORD BYRON

For blight and desolation, compassed round
With hatred and contention; pain was mixed
In all which was served up to him, until,
Like to the Pontic monarch of old days,
He fed on poisons, and they had no power,
But were a kind of nutriment; he lived
Through that which had been death to many men,
And made him friends of mountains: with the stars
And the quick Spirit of the universe
He held his dialogues; and they did teach
To him the magic of their mysteries;
To him the book of Night was opened wide,
And voices from the deep abyss revealed
A marvel and a secret. Be it so.

My dream was past; it had no further change.
It was of a strange order, that the doom
Of these two creatures should be thus traced out
Almost like a reality—the one
To end in madness—both in misery.

Darkness

I HAD a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguished; and the stars
Did wander, darkling, in the eternal space,
Rayless and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air.
Morn came, and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions, in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chilled into a selfish prayer for light.
And they did live by watch-fires; and the thrones,

LORD BYRON

The palaces of crownèd kings, the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons: cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing homes,
To look once more into each other's face.
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanoes and their mountain torch.

A fearful hope was all the world contained:
Forests were set on fire; but, hour by hour,
They fell and faded; and the crackling trunks
Extinguished with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men, by the despairing light,
Wore an unearthly aspect, as, by fits,
The flashes fell upon them. Some lay down,
And hid their eyes, and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and looked up,
With mad disquietude, on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses, cast them down upon the dust,
And gnashed their teeth, and howled. The wild birds
shrieked,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings: the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawled
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.

And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
With blood, and each sat sullenly apart,
Gorging himself in gloom; no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death,

LORD BYRON

Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails. Men
Died; and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meager by the meager were devoured.
Even dogs assailed their masters—all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds, and beasts, and famished men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the drooping dead
Lured their lank jaws: himself sought out no food,
But, with a piteous, and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress—he died.

The crowd was famished by degrees. But two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies. They met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place,
Where had been heaped a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage. They raked up,
And, shivering, scraped with their cold, skeleton hands,
The feeble ashes; and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame,
Which was a mockery. Then they lifted
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shrieked, and died;
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was, upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend.

The world was void:
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless;
A lump of death, a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes and ocean, all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths.

LORD BYRON

Ships, sailorless, lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropped
They slept on the abyss, without a surge;
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave;
The moon, their mistress, had expired before;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perished: Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—she was the universe.

Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte

'TIS done—but yesterday a King!
And armed with Kings to strive—
And now thou art a nameless thing;
So abject—yet alive!
Is this the man of thousand thrones,
Who strewed our earth with hostile bones?
And can he thus survive?
Since, he, miscalled the Morning Star,
Nor man nor fiend hath fallen so far.

Ill-minded man! why scourge thy kind
Who bowed so low the knee?
By gazing on thyself grown blind,
Thou taught'st the rest to see.
With might unquestioned—power to save;
Thine only gift hath been the grave,
To those that worshipped thee;
Nor till thy fall could mortals guess
Ambition's less than littleness!

Thanks for that lesson—it will teach
To after warriors more
Than high Philosophy can preach,

And vainly preached before.
 That spell upon the minds of men
 Breaks, never to unite again,
 That led them to adore
 Those Pagod things of sabre sway,
 With fronts of brass, and feet of clay.

The triumph, and the vanity,
 The rapture of the strife—
 The earthquake voice of Victory,
 To thee the breath of life;
 The sword, the sceptre, and that sway
 Which man seemed made but to obey,
 Wherewith renown was rife—
 All quelled!—Dark Spirit! what must be
 The madness of thy memory!

The Desolator desolate!
 The Victor overthrown
 The arbiter of others' fate
 A suppliant for his own!
 Is it some yet imperial hope,
 That with such change can calmly cope?
 Or dread of death alone?
 To die a prince—or live a slave—
 Thy choice is most ignobly brave!

He who of old would rend the oak,
 Dreamed not of the rebound;
 Chained by the trunk he vainly broke—
 Alone—how looked he round?
 Thou, in the sternness of thy strength,
 An equal deed hast done at length,
 And darker fate hast found;

LORD BYRON

He fell, the forest prowler's prey:
But thou must eat thy heart away!

The Roman, when his burning heart,
Was slaked with blood of Rome,
Threw down the dagger—dared depart,
 In savage grandeur, home—
He dared depart in utter scorn
Of men that such a yoke had borne,
 Yet left him such a doom!
His only glory was that hour
Of self-upheld abandoned power.

The Spaniard, when the lust of sway
 Had lost its quickening spell,
Cast crowns for rosaries away,
 An empire for a cell;
A strict accountant of his beads,
A subtle disputant on creeds,
 His dotage trifled well:
Yet better had he neither known
A bigot's shrine, nor despot's throne.

But thou—from thy reluctant hand
 The thunderbolt is wrung—
Too late thou leav'st the high command
 To which thy weakness clung;
All Evil Spirit as thou art,
It is enough to grieve the heart
 To see thine own unstrung;
To think that God's fair world hath been
The footstool of a thing so mean!

LORD BYRON

And earth hath spilt her blood for him,
Who thus can hoard his own!
And Monarchs bowed the trembling limb,
And thanked him for a throne!
Fair Freedom! we may hold thee dear,
When thus thy mightiest foes their fear
In humblest guise have shown.
Oh! ne'er may tyrant leave behind
A brighter name to lure mankind!

Thine evil deeds are writ in gore,
Nor written thus in vain—
Thy triumphs tell of fame no more,
Or deepen every stain:
If thou hadst died as honor dies,
Some new Napoleon might arise,
To shame the world again—
But who would soar the solar height,
To set in such a starless night?

Weighed in the balance, hero dust
Is vile as vulgar clay;
Thy scales, Mortality! are just
To all that pass away:
But yet methought the living great
Some higher sparks should animate,
To dazzle and dismay;
Nor deemed Contempt could thus make mirth
Of these, the Conquerors of the earth.

And she, proud Austria's mournful flower,
Thy still imperial bride;
How bears her breast the torturing hour?
Still clings she to thy side?
Must she, too, bend—must she, too, share,

LORD BYRON

Thy late repentance, long despair,
Thou throneless Homicide?
If still she loves thee, hoard that gem;
'Tis worth thy vanished diadem!

Then haste thee to thy sullen Isle,
And gaze upon the sea:
That element may meet thy smile—
It ne'er was ruled by thee!
Or trace with thine all idle hand,
In loitering mood upon the sand,
That Earth is now as free!
That Corinth's pedagogue hath now,
Transferred his by-word to thy brow.

Thou Timour! in his captive's cage—
What thoughts will there be thine,
While brooding in thy prisoned rage?
But one—"The world *was* mine!"
Unless, like he of Babylon,
All sense is with thy sceptre gone,
Life will not long confine
That spirit poured so widely forth—
So long obeyed—so little worth!

Or, like the thief of fire from heaven,
Wilt thou withstand the shock?
And share with him, the unforgiven,
His vulture and his rock?
Foredoomed by God—by man accurst,
And that last act, though not thy worst,
The very Fiend's arch mock!
He, in his fall preserved his pride,
And, if a mortal, had as proudly died!

LORD BYRON

There was a day—there was an hour,
While earth was Gaul's—Gaul thine—
When that immeasurable power,
Unsated, to resign,
Had been an act of purer fame,
Than gathers round Marengo's name,
And gilded thy decline,
Through the long twilight of all time,
Despite some passing clouds of crime.

But thou, forsooth, must be a king,
And don the purple vest,
As if that foolish robe could wring
Remembrance from thy breast.
Where is the faded garment? where
The gewgaws thou wert fond to wear,
The star—the string—the crest?
Vain froward child of empire! say,
Are all thy playthings snatched away?

Where may the wearied eye repose,
When gazing on the Great,
Where neither guilty glory glows,
Nor despicable state?
Yes—one—the first—the last—the best—
The Cincinnatus of the West,
Whom envy dared not hate,
Bequeath the name of Washington,
To make man blush there was but one!

WILLIAM KNOX
ENGLAND, 1789-1825

Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?

The following poem was a particular favorite with Abraham Lincoln. It was first shown to him when a young man by a friend, and afterwards he cut it from a newspaper and learned it by heart. He said to a friend, "I would give a great deal to know who wrote it, but have never been able to ascertain." He was told, in 1864.

OH, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,
Shall molder to dust and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant's affection who proved;
The husband that mother and infant who blessed,
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

WILLIAM KNOX

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who loved her and praised,
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the scepter hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the miter hath worn,
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman who climbed with his goats up the steep,
The beggar who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint who enjoyed the communion of heaven,
The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes, like the flower and the weed
That wither away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same that our fathers have been;
We see the same sights that our fathers have seen,
We drink the same stream and view the same sun,
And run the same course that our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think;
From the death we are shrinking from, they too would
shrink,
To the life we are clinging to, they too would cling;
But it speeds from the earth, like a bird on the wing.

WILLIAM KNOX

They loved, but their story we cannot unfold;
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved, but no wail from their slumbers will
 come;
They joyed, but the voice of their gladness is dumb.

They died—ay! they died: and we things that are now,
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
Who make in their dwelling a transient abode,
Meet the changes they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

CHARLES WOLFE

IRELAND, 1791-1823

The Burial of Sir John Moore after Corunna

JANUARY 16, 1809

The author of this famous ode was an obscure Irish clergyman, who wrote no other poem of consequence. This one was written several years before it was published, without the knowledge of the poet, by a friend who had memorized it and brought about its publication. Almost immediately it took its place among the best martial poems in the language, preëminent for simplicity, patriotic fervor and manly pathos.

NOT a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
And the lanthorn dimly burning.

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.

CHARLES WOLFE

Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face of the dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow.

We thought, as we hollowed his narrow bed
And smoothed down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,
And we far away on the billow!

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him—
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our heavy task was done
When the clock struck the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
But we left him alone with his glory.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

ENGLAND, 1792-1822

SHELLEY's first great poem was *Alastor*, and his two most extended works were the tragedy, *The Cenci*, and the dramatic poem, *Prometheus Unbound*. At his death he had only nineteen readers, but now he is one of the chief glories of the literary world.

He wreaked his thought upon expression. Nothing of his (as Poe tells us) is ever worked out: he errs sometimes by too much concision. His poetry seems not to be heard, but to be overhead. He seems always to be singing to his own spirit. In his higher moments he sings impulsively, earnestly, divinely: he swings out into the abandon of the gods.

In the *Ode to the Skylark*, he reveals the chain of lovely suggestions made by that music out of the empyrean. Here, as in the *Ode to the West Wind*, we have a rainbow of brilliance, a marshalling of edenic powers and processes. Shelley was responsive to the faintest moods and meanings of Nature, and his music met his thought as when the breeze and the Æolian harp whisper their ecstasy.

"Think," says De Quincey, "of the early misery which he suffered, of the gathering darkness upon which the phantasmagoria of all that was to come arranged itself in troubled phosphoric dreams, and in sweeping processions of woe! Yet, again, when one recurs to his gracious nature, his fearlessness, his truth, his purity from all fleshliness of appetite, his freedom from vanity, his diffusive love and tenderness, suddenly out of the darkness flashes a May morning, forests and thickets of roses advance to the foreground, from amid which looks out the eternal child."

Swinburne bears witness to Shelley's "adoration of the personal Jesus, combined as it was with an equal abhorrence of Christian theology." In this, he was "at one

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

with Blake, the only poet or thinker then alive with whom he had so much in common." We are assured that Shelley's "blow aimed at the creed would imply nothing of insult or outrage to the person."

Shelley appeared as the child of a weird and piercing melody. Thomas Lake Harris says of him: "The boy dreamer and lover; the youthful sage and philanthropist; by native gifts and qualities of life the deep explorer of woman and hence of man; the half-born adept; the minstrel of a strain of vivid pathos, tenderness, and intensity of aspiration; of deepest human pity and longing for the welfare of all that live; of scorn, hatred and detestation of all things ignoble, enslaving and corrupting—this was Shelley. He was a Christian in essence, though by the outward mind he knew not Christ—Christa: had he known, he would have gone up fearlessly, gently, humbly, to nestle in the Mother's bosom and to lay his head upon the Father's knee. . . . The child grew up among the wolfish instincts of a dominant egoistic caste and race, which had inverted its own supreme cult, transposing it in form and feature from the sense of its original altruism—a race that, for its kings, had an imbecile about to be followed by a debauchee, and that had, instituted into its proud sanctuaries of religion, a godless mammon service. There the titled great held the people by the throat: the peasants in the fields and the operatives of the towns lived, age by age, upon the verge of famine, in a land that overflowed with plenty.

"These were Shelley's surroundings: the misapprehension of his thought, the mistakes of his brief career, are not to be compared with the energizing perfections which that career implied, nor with the trains of noble sentiments and purposes which that thought has assisted to generate.

"Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life!"

A Dirge

ROUGH wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main,
Wail, for the world's wrong!

Music When Soft Voices Die

MUSIC, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odors, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the belovèd's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Hymn of Pan

FROM the forests and highlands
We come, we come;
From the river-girth islands
Where loud waves are dumb,
Listening to my sweet pipings.
The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
The bees on the bells of thyme,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

The birds on the myrtle bushes,
The cicale above in the lime,
And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
Listening to my sweet pipings.

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
And all dark Tempe lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
The light of the dying day,
SPEEDED by my sweet pipings.
The Sileni and Sylvans and Fauns,
And the Nymphs of the woods and waves,
To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow,
Were silent with love, as you now, Apollo,
With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars,
I sang of the dædal earth,
And of heaven, and the giant wars,
And love, and death, and birth.
And then I changed my pipings—
Singing how down the vale of Mænalus
I pursued a maiden, and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus:
It breaks in our bosom, and then we bleed.
All wept—as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood—
At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

Hellas

THE world's great age begins anew,
 The golden years return,
 The earth doth like a snake renew
 Her winter weeds outworn:
 Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
 Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
 From waves serener far;
 A new Peneus rolls his fountains
 Against the morning star;
 Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
 Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
 Fraught with a later prize;
 Another Orpheus sings again,
 And loves, and weeps, and dies;
 A new Ulysses leaves once more
 Calypso for his native shore.

O write no more the tale of Troy,
 If earth Death's scroll must be—
 Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
 Which dawns upon the free,
 Although a subtler Sphinx renew
 Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
 And to remoter time
 Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
 The splendor of its prime;

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

And leave, if naught so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued:
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.¹

O cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy!
The world is weary of the past—
O might it die or rest at last!

¹ "Saturn and Love" were among the deities of a real or imaginary state of innocence and happiness. "All" those "who fell," or the Gods of Greece, Asia, and Egypt; the "One who rose," or Jesus Christ, at whose appearance the idols of the Pagan World were amerced of their worship; and "the many unsubdued," or the monstrous objects of the idolatry of China, India, the Antarctic islands, and the native tribes of America, certainly have reigned over the understandings of men in conjunction or in succession, during periods in which all we know of evil has been in a state of portentous, and (until the revival of learning and the arts) perpetually increasing activity. (*From Shelley's Note.*)

To a Skylark

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert—

That from heaven or near it

Pourest thy full heart

In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher

From the earth thou springest,

Like a cloud of fire;

The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightening

Of the sunken sun,

O'er which clouds are brightening,

Thou dost float and run,

Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even

Melts around thy flight;

Like a star of heaven,

In the broad daylight

Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight—

Keen as are the arrows

Of that silver sphere

Whose intense lamp narrows

In the white dawn clear,

Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air

With thy voice is loud,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is over-
flowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see,
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody:

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the
view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged
thieves:

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers—
All that ever was

Joyous and clear and fresh—thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine

That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Matched with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt—

A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?

What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:

Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,

Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet, if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear,
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground?

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know;
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.

A Lament

O WORLD! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—Oh, never more!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Out of the day and night

A joy has taken flight;

Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—Oh, never more!

Ode to the West Wind

I

O WILD West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's
being,

Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill;

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, O hear!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning! there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: O hear!

III¹

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiæ's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

¹ The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of this third part is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it. (*Shelley's note.*)

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: O hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! if even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision—I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own?
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth;
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Indian Serenade

I ARISE from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright.
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
And the champak's odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine,
O belovèd as thou art!

O lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast:
O press it close to thine again,
Where it must break at last!

Night

SWIFTLY walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear
Which make thee terrible and dear—
Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to her rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
"Wouldst thou me?"
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
"Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?" And I replied,
"No, not thee!"

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled.
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, belovèd Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

Lines

WHEN the lamp is shattered,
 The light in the dust lies dead;
 When the cloud is scattered,
 The rainbow's glory is shed;
 When the lute is broken,
 Sweet tones are remembered not;
 When the lips have spoken,
 Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendor
 Survive not the lamp and the lute,
 The heart's echoes render
 No song when the spirit is mute—
 No song but sad dirges,
 Like the wind through a ruined cell,
 Or the mournful surges
 That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled,
 Love first leaves the well-built nest;
 The weak one is singled
 To endure what it once possest.
 O Love, who bewailest
 The frailty of all things here,
 Why choose you the frailest
 For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

Its passions will rock thee,
 As the storms rock the ravens on high:
 Bright reason will mock thee,
 Like the sun from a wintry sky.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

To —

ONE word is too often profaned
For me to profane it;
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother;
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love:
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not,
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Ozymandias of Egypt

I MET a traveller from an antique land
 Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
 Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand
 Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
 And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
 Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
 Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
 The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
 And on the pedestal these words appear:
 "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
 Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"
 Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
 Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
 The lone and level sands stretch far away.

From "Lines Written among the Euganean Hills"

MANY a green isle needs must be
 In the deep wide sea of misery;
 Or the mariner, worn and wan,
 Never thus could voyage on
 Day and night, and night and day,
 Drifting on his dreary way,
 With the solid darkness black
 Closing round his vessel's track;
 Whilst above, the sunless sky,
 Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
 And behind the tempest fleet
 Hurries on with lightning feet,
 Riving sail and cord and plank

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Till the ship has almost drank
Death from the o'erbrimming deep;
And sinks down, down, like that sleep
When the dreamer seems to be
Weltering through eternity;
And the dim low line before
Of a dark and distant shore
Still recedes, as, ever still
Longing with divided will,
But no power to seek or shun,
He is ever drifted on
O'er the unrepousing wave
To the haven of the grave.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide agony:
To such a one this morn was led
My bark, by soft winds piloted.
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the pæan
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic:
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail;
And the vapors cloven and gleaming

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Follow down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright and clear and still
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair;
Underneath day's azure eyes,
Ocean's nursling, Venice, lies—
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower and dome and spire
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt city! thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin than than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne among the waves
Wilt thou be when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace-gate
With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way
Wandering at the close of day
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid mask of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Noon descends around me now:
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist,
Like a vaporous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolvèd star,
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound
To the point of heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath; the leaves unsodden
Where the infant frost has trodden

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

With his morning-wingèd feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air; the flower
Glimmering at my feet; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun;
And of living things each one;
And my spirit, which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song,
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky:
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odor, or the soul of all
Which from heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.
Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs:
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like wingèd winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

The frail bark of this lone being)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,
And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of life and agony;
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf; even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded winds they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell 'mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:
—We may live so happy there,
That the spirits of the air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing paradise
The polluting multitude;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

With its own deep melodies;
And the love which heals all strife,
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood:
They, not it, would change; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again!

Mutability

THE flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay
Tempts and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship how rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy, and all
Which ours we call.

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

The Cloud

I

I BRING fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
 From the seas and the streams;
 I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
 In their noonday dreams.
 From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
 The sweet birds every one,
 When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
 As she dances about the sun.
 I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
 And whiten the green plains under;
 And then again I dissolve it in rain,
 And laugh as I pass in thunder.

II

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
 And their great pines groan aghast;
 And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
 While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
 Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers
 Lightning, my pilot, sits;
 In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
 It struggles and howls by fits;
 Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
 This pilot is guiding me,
 Lured by the love of the genii that move
 In the depths of the purple sea;
 Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
 Over the lakes and the plains,
 Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
 The spirit he loves remains;

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

III

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest on my airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

IV

That orb'd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm river, lakes and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

V

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march,
With hurricane, fire and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

VI

I am the daughter of the earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain, when, with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams, with their convex gleams,
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

*From "Epipsychidion: Verses addressed to the
noble and unfortunate Lady Emilia
Viviani, now imprisoned in the Convent
of St. Anne, Pisa"*

SPOUSE! sister! angel! pilot of the fate
Whose course has been so starless! O too late
Belovèd, O too soon adored, by me!
For in the fields of immortality
My spirit should at first have worshipped thine,
A divine presence in a place divine;
Or should have moved beside it on this earth,
A shadow of that substance, from its birth:
But not as now. I love thee; yes, I feel
That on the fountain of my heart a seal
Is set, to keep its waters pure and bright
For thee, since in those tears thou hast delight.
We—are we not formed, as notes of music are,
For one another, though dissimilar?
Such difference without discord as can make
Those sweetest sounds in which all spirits shake,
As trembling leaves in a continuous air.

Thy wisdom speaks in me, and bids me dare
Beacon the rocks on which high hearts are wrecked.
I never was attached to that great sect
Whose doctrine is that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion; though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
Who travel to their home among the dead

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths; 'tis like thy light,
Imagination, which from earth and sky,
And from the depths of human fantasy,
As from a thousand prisms and mirrors, fills
The universe with glorious beams, and kills
Error the worm with many a sunlike arrow
Of its reverberated lightning. Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates,
One object and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity!

Mind from its object differs most in this:
Evil from good; misery from happiness;
The baser from the nobler; the impure
And frail from what is clear and must endure.
If you divide suffering and dross, you may
Diminish till it is consumed away;
If you divide pleasure and love and thought,
Each part exceeds the whole; and we know not
How much, while any yet remains unshared,
Of pleasure may be gained, of sorrow spared.
This truth is that deep well whence sages draw
The unenvied light of hope; the eternal law
By which those live to whom this world of life
Is as a garden ravaged, and whose strife

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Tills for the promise of a later birth
The wilderness of this elysian earth.

* * * * *

The day is come, and thou wilt fly with me!
To whatsoever of dull mortality
Is mine remain a vestal sister still;
To the intense, the deep, the imperishable—
Not mine, but me—henceforth be thou united,
Even as a bride, delighting and delighted.
The hour is come: the destined star has risen
Which shall descend upon a vacant prison.
The walls are high, the gates are strong, thick set
The sentinels—but true Love never yet
Was thus constrained. It overleaps all fence:
Like lightning, with invisible violence
Piercing its continents; like heaven's free breath,
Which he who grasps can hold not; liker Death,
Who rides upon a thought, and makes his way
Through temple, tower and palace, and the array
Of arms. More strength has Love than he or they;
For it can burst his charnel, and make free
The limbs in chains, the heart in agony,
The soul in dust and chaos.

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbor now;
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,—
No keel has ever ploughed that path before;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous ocean has forsworn its wiles;
The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Our bark is as an albatross whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple east;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night
And Day and Storm and Calm pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of paradise;
And, for the harbors are not safe and good,
This land would have remained a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold—
Simple and spirited, innocent and bold.
The blue Ægean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam
Kissing the sifted sands and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide.
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air. And far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns and bowers and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails,
Accompany the noonday nightingales.
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs.
The light clear element which the isle wears
Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
And from the moss violets and jonquils peep,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

And dart their arrowy odor through the brain,
Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
And every motion, odor, beam, and tone,
With that deep music is in unison:
Which is a soul within the soul—they seem
Like echoes of an antenatal dream.
It is an isle 'twixt heaven, air, earth and sea,
Cradled, and hung in clear tranquillity;
Bright as that wandering Eden, Lucifer,
Washed by the soft blue oceans of young air.
It is a favored place. Famine or blight,
Pestilence, war and earthquake, never light
Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
Sail onward far upon their fatal way.
The wingèd storms, chaunting their thunder-psalm
To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
From which its fields and woods ever renew
Their green and golden immortality.
And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
There fall clear exhalations, soft and bright,
Veil after veil, each hiding some delight:
Which sun or moon or zephyr draw aside,
Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
Blushes and trembles at its own excess.
Yet, like a buried lamp, a soul no less
Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
An atom of the Eternal, whose own smile
Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
O'er the grey rocks, blue waves and forests green,
Filling their bare and void interstices.

* * * * *

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

This isle and house are mine, and I have vowed
Thee to be lady of the solitude.
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden eastern air,
And level with the living winds which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn; and therefore still
Nature with all her children haunts the hill.
The ringdove in the embowering ivy yet
Keeps up her love-lament; and the owls flit
Round the evening tower; and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moonlight
Before our gate; and the slow silent night
Is measured by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life; and, when years heap
Their withered hours like leaves on our decay,
Let us become the overhanging day,
The living soul, of this elysian isle—
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise and sit and walk together
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather;
And wander in the meadows; or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds to touch their paramour;
Or linger where the pebble-paven shore
Under the quick faint kisses of the sea

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy—
Possessing and possessed by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one—or at the noontide hour arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expired Night asleep,
Through which the awakened Day can never peep;
A veil for our seclusion, close as Night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights—
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonising silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together; and our lips,
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them; and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh wherefore two?
One passion in twin hearts, which grows and grew
Till, like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigured; ever still
Burning, yet ever inconsumable;
In one another's substance finding food,
Light flames too pure and light and unimbued
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Which point to heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One heaven, one hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation!

Woe is me!

The wingèd words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare universe
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire—
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

From "Adonais; an Elegy on the Death of John Keats"

This stands with the greatest elegies of the world. It pays homage to John Keats, who died in Rome in 1821. Shelley was aware of the imperfections of the youthful "Endymion," but placed the "Hyperion" at the summit of Keats's achievement. Shelley was stirred by the opinion (now discredited) that Keats's untimely death was caused by a brutal criticism of "Endymion" in "The Quarterly Review."

"Adonais" breathes no individual sorrow, but it speaks a wild regret for this pathetic death, it utters a passionate indignation against the insolence of murderous critics. The mourners for "Adonais" are not so much persons as they are insubstantial personifications—Poetry, Dreams, Persuasions, Splendors, Glooms, Glimmering Incarnations. The lament is for Keats the poet, not for Keats the man. Some of the noblest stanzas are in the closing speculative parts. Shelley believed that back of Nature and Human Nature there is an Anima Mundi, the absolute energy, the sustaining power, which is the source of all beauty and all love. This power reveals itself through Nature and Man

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

as far as the resistant outer media will permit. Man in his earthly life is not really alive, being partly separated from this power. When a man dies, if he has an affiliation with this divine power, then that power will draw him into its beautiful mystery.

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead!
O weep for Adonais, though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow! Say: “With me
Died Adonais! Till the future dares
Forget the past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity.”

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? Where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
Mid listening Echoes, in her paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamored breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

Oh weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!—
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep,
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone where all things wise and fair
Descend Oh dream not that the amorous deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died
Who was the sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride
The priest, the slave and the liberticide,
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood. He went unterrified
Into the gulf of death; but his clear sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth, the third among the Sons of
Light.

Oh weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-wingèd ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not—
Wander no more from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there whence they sprung; and mourn
their lot
Round the cold heart where, after their sweet pain,
They never will gather strength or find a home again.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. *We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living
clay.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn. . . .

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling
there,
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear,
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

The splendors of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved,
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved;
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd. . . .

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles—the low wind whispers near;
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me: my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Peaks of Life

FROM "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

Shelley believed that in the destiny of mankind evil is not inherent but is an accident that may be expelled. In other words, Shelley believed that mankind has only to will that there shall be no evil, and—behold—there will be none. Evidently he looked on evil as an interloper—not as a necessity of existence. Life may be all-good, but in different degrees of goodness—the greater good, the evolving lesser good. In this he stood on the philosophic ground taken by Jesus in "The Gospels."

TO suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire and Victory.

Voice in the Air

FROM "PROMETHEUS UNBOUND"

LIFE of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendor,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

Asia

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

From "Alastor"
or
The Spirit of Solitude
[Shelley's Preface]

The poem entitled "Alastor" may be considered as allegorical of one of the most interesting situations of the human mind. It represents a youth of uncorrupted feelings and adventurous genius led forth by an imagination inflamed and purified through familiarity with all that is excellent and majestic, to the contemplation of the universe. He drinks deep of the fountains of knowledge, and is still insatiate. The magnificence and beauty of the external world sinks profoundly into the frame of his conceptions, and affords to their modifications a variety not to be exhausted. So long as it is possible for his desires to point towards objects thus infinite and unmeasured, he is joyous, and tranquil, and self-possessed. But the period arrives when these objects cease to suffice. His mind is at length suddenly awakened and thirsts for intercourse with an intelligence similar to itself. He images to himself the Being whom he loves. Conversant with speculations of the sublimest and most perfect natures, the vision in which he embodies his own imaginations unites all of wonderful, or wise, or beautiful, which the poet, the philosopher, or the lover could depicture. The intellectual faculties, the imagination, the functions of sense, have their respective requisitions on the sympathy of corresponding powers in other human beings. The Poet is represented as uniting these requisitions, and attaching them to a single image. He seeks in vain for a prototype of his conception. Blasted by his disappointment, he descends to an untimely grave.

The picture is not barren of instruction to actual men. The Poet's self-centred seclusion was avenged by the furies of an irresistible passion pursuing him to speedy

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

ruin. But that Power which strikes the luminaries of the world with sudden darkness and extinction, by awakening them to too exquisite a perception of its influences, dooms to a slow and poisonous decay those meaner spirits that dare to abjure its dominion. Their destiny is more abject and inglorious as their delinquency is more contemptible and pernicious. They who, deluded by no generous error, instigated by no sacred thirst of doubtful knowledge, duped by no illustrious superstition, loving nothing on this earth, and cherishing no hopes beyond, yet keep aloof, from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their apportioned curse. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature. They are morally dead. They are neither friends, nor lovers, nor fathers, nor citizens of the world, nor benefactors of their country. Among those who attempt to exist without human sympathy, the pure and tender-hearted perish through the intensity and passion of their search after its communities, when the vacancy of their spirit suddenly makes itself felt. All else, selfish, blind, and torpid, are those unforeseeing multitudes who constitute, together with their own, the lasting misery and loneliness of the world. Those who love not their fellow-beings live unfruitful lives, and prepare for their old age a miserable grave.

*"The good die first,
And those whose hearts are dry as summer dust,
Burn to the socket!"*

December 14, 1815.

*Nondum amabam, et amare amabam, quærebam quid
amarem amans amare
Confessions of St. Augustine.*

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

EARTH, Ocean, Air, belovèd brotherhood!
If our great mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And Winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the grey grass and bare boughs—
If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses—have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast,
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred—then forgive
This boast, belovèd brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favor now!

Mother of this unfathomable world,
Favor my solemn song! for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black Death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee;
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

With my most innocent love; until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge. And, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,
Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless (as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane)
I wait thy breath, Great Parent; that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And the motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hand with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his moldering bones a pyramid
Of moldering leaves in the waste wilderness.
A lovely youth, no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers or votive cypress-wreath
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle and brave and generous, no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sang, in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes;
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamored of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

By solemn vision and bright silver dream
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips: and all of great
Or good or lovely which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home,
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness
Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke; or where bitumen-lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge; or where the secret caves
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder. He would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home;
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous hand his bloodless food,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens and Tyre and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange,
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk,
Or jasper tomb, or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Ethiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble dæmons watch
The zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth; through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades,
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps:
Enamored, yet not daring for deep awe

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

To speak her love—and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose. Then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home,
Wildered and wan and panting, she returned.

The poet, wandering on, through Arabia
And Persia and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the ærial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmere, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-colored woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,
And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire. Wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos: her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burden. At the sound he turned,
And saw, by the warm light of their own life,
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind; her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sank and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom—she drew back awhile;
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance.
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? the sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of earth,
The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The Spirit of sweet Human Love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dreams that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, for ever lost
In the wide pathless desert of dim Sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of Death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds,
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake,
Lead only to a black and watery depth;
While Death's blue vault with loathliest vapors hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart:
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness. As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates,
Through night and day, tempest and calm and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide æry wilderness; thus, driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moonlight snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on,
Till vast Aornos, seen from Petra's steep,
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone,
As in a furnace burning secretly,
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of Wind,
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In his career. The infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times. But youthful maidens, taught
By Nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names,
Brother and friend, would press his pallid hand

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasmian shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight: "Thou hast a home,
Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?" A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For Sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge; and silent Death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as Sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around:
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark.
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny: sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leapt in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled
The straining boat. A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge,
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm, and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in duskier wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of Day;
Night followed clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm, still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass,
That fell, convulsing ocean—safely fled—
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
The moon arose: and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves,
Bursting and edying irresistibly,
Rage and resound for ever. Who shall save?
The boat fled on—the boiling torrent drove—
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,
The shattered mountain overhung the sea;
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Engulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed. "Vision and Love!"
The Poet cried aloud, "I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and Death
Shall not divide us long."

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow.
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarlèd roots
Of mighty trees that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. I' the midst was left,
Reflecting yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round and round and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose;
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering. Shall it sink
Down the abyss? shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall? A wandering stream of wind,
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail;
And lo! with gentle motion, between banks
Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails: and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
For ever gaze on their own drooping eyes
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which nought but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay,
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair;
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry: it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The nooday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks,
Mocking its moans respond and roar for ever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as, led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt some bank,
Her cradle, and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar, overarching, frame
Most solemn domes within; and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,
Starred with ten-thousand blossoms, flow around
The grey trunks; and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make network of the dark-blue light of day
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose twined with jasmine
A soul-dissolving odour, to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell,
Silence and Twilight here, twin sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half-seen. Beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star
Between one foliated lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves; the grass that sprung
Startled, and glanced and trembled, even to feel
An unaccustomed presence; and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him—clothed in no bright robes
Of shadowy silver or enshrining light
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace or majesty or mystery;
But—undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming—
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was. Only—when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness—two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

* * * * *

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine. Upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Of that obscurest chasm—and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and Despair,
The torturers, slept: no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose; the influxes of sense,
And his own being unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling. His last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests; and still, as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With Nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still.
And, when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night—till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused—it fluttered. But, when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapor fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame—
No sense, no motion, no divinity—
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander—a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves—a dream
Of youth which night and time have quenched for ever—
Still, dark and dry, and unremembered now.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Oh for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which, wheresoe'er it fell, made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders for ever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,
Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world!—But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams—ah thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius! Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty earth,
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice—but thou art fled—
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not! Upon those pallid lips,
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed—not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Let not high verse mourning the memory
 Of that which is no more, or painting's woe,
 Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
 Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
 And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
 To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
 It is a woe "too deep for tears" when all
 Is reft at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
 Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
 Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
 The passionate tumult of a clinging hope—
 But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
 Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
 Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.¹

¹ None of Shelley's poems is more characteristic than this. The solemn spirit that reigns throughout, the worship of the majesty of nature, the broodings of a poet's heart in solitude—the mingling of the exulting joy which the various aspects of the visible universe inspires with the sad and struggling pangs which human passion imparts—give a touching interest to the whole. The death which he had often contemplated during the last months as certain and near he here represented in such colors as had, in his lonely musings, soothed his soul to peace. The versification sustains the solemn spirit which breathes throughout: it is peculiarly melodious. The poem ought rather to be considered didactic than narrative; it was the outpouring of his own emotions, embodied in the purest form he could conceive, painted in the ideal hues which his brilliant imagination inspired, and softened by the recent anticipation of death. (*Mrs. Shelley's note.*)

The deeper meaning of *Alastor* is to be found, not in the thought of death nor in the poet's recent communings with nature, but in the motto from St. Augustine placed upon its title-page, and in the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, composed about a year later. Enamored of ideal loveliness, the poet pursues his vision through the universe, vainly hoping to assuage the thirst which has been stimulated in his spirit, and vainly longing for some mortal realization of his love. *Alastor*, like *Epipsychidion*, reveals the mistake which Shelley made in thinking that the idea of beauty could become incarnate for him in any earthly form; while the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* recognizes the truth that such realization of the ideal is impossible. The very last letter written by Shelley sets the misconception in its proper light: "I think one is always in love with something or other; the error, and I confess it is not easy for spirits cased in flesh and blood to avoid it, consists in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

THE awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen amongst us—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower,
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain
shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread—
Like memory of music fled—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

what is, perhaps, eternal." But this Shelley discovered only with "the years that bring the philosophic mind," and when he was upon the very verge of his untimely death. (Symonds' *Life of Shelley*.)

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost and Heaven
Remain the records of their vain endeavor,
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to
sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night wind sent,
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Love, Hope and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is
fed;

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned
bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, SPIRIT fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Men of England

MEN of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat—nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth—let no impostor heap;
Weave robes—let not the idle wear;
Forge arms—in your defence to bear.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Shrink to your cellars, holes and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre.

Slavery

WHAT is Freedom? Ye can tell
That which Slavery is too well,
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.
'Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell,
So that ye for them are made
Loom and plough and sword and spade,
With or without your own will, bent
To their defense and nourishment.
'Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak
When the winter winds are bleak—
They are dying whilst I speak.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

'Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye.

* * * *

'Tis to be a slave in soul,
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye;
And, at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain,
'Tis to see the tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you—
Blood is on the grass like dew!
Then it is to feel revenge,
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood, and wrong for wrong;
Do not thus when ye are strong!
Birds find rest in narrow nest,
When weary of their wingèd quest;
Beasts find fare in woody lair
When storms and snow are in the air;
Horses, oxen, have a home
When from daily toil they come;
Household dogs, when the wind rears,
Find a home within warm doors;
Asses, swine, have litter spread,
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one:
Thou, O Englishman, hast none!
This is Slavery!—Savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den,
Would endure not as ye do;
But such ills they never knew.

* * * *

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you!
Ye are many, they are few.

FELICIA HEMANS

ENGLAND, 1793-1835

M^{RS.} HEMANS was the popular woman poet of her time, esteemed by both Scott and Wordsworth. Her poetry is mainly lyrical and descriptive. The first of the following selections is of interest, not so much as a poem, but more as a resounding declamation, celebrating one of the great moments of history.

Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers

THE breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tossed;
And the heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted, came;
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;
Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear—
They shook the depths of the desert's gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

FELICIA HEMANS

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard, and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free.
The ocean eagle soared
From his nest by the white wave's foam;
And the rocking pines of the forest roared—
This was their welcome home!

There were men with hoary hair,
Amidst that pilgrim-band:
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood's land?
There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas? the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!
Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod:
They have left unstained what there they found—
Freedom to worship God!

Dirge

CALM on the bosom of thy God,
Fair spirit, rest thee now!
Even while with ours thy footsteps trod,
His seal was on thy brow.

FELICIA HEMANS

Dust, to its narrow house beneath!
Soul, to its place on high!
They that have seen thy look in death
No more may fear to die.

Casabianca

In the battle of the Nile, the "Orient" took fire, and her guns were abandoned, except by the Admiral's son, Casabianca. This boy, about thirteen years of age, remained at his post until the flames reached the powder, whereupon he perished in the explosion. He had been ordered to stand at a certain post, but he should have saved himself. He was obedient, but we should learn that there are occasional cases where we need to see a command in the light of our common sense.

THE boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm—
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames rolled on—he would not go
Without his father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

FELICIA HEMANS

He called aloud: "Say, father say,
If yet my task is done!"
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, father!" once again he cried,
"If I may yet be gone!"
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And looked from that lone post of death,
In still yet brave despair:

And shouted but once more aloud,
"My father! must I stay?"
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendor wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder-sound—
The boy—oh, where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!

With mast and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part—
But the noblest thing that perished there
Was that young faithful heart.

HENRY FRANCIS LYTE

SCOTLAND, 1793-1847

From "Abide with Me"

ABIDE with me! Fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim; its glories pass away:
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou, who changest not, abide with me!

JOHN CLARE

ENGLAND, 1793-1864

THIS poet was the son of a wandering pauper, fiddler, teacher and farm-laborer. John Clare wrote his earlier poems in the intervals of hard work in the fields, and his later poems appeared during lucid intervals in a madhouse, to which ill-health, overwork and strong drink had driven him.

He educated himself by reading the best poets. Using the old meters, he wrote of the things about him—the village, the fields, the folk, the flowers. His outlook is local, but keen, and lavish in detail.

JOHN CLARE

The Thrush's Nest

WITHIN a thick and spreading hawthorn bush
That overhung a molehill, large and round,
I heard from morn to morn, a merry thrush
Sing hymns of rapture, while I drank the sound
With joy—and oft an unintruding guest,
I watched her secret toils from day to day
How true she warped the moss to form her nest,
And modelled it within with wood and clay.

And by and by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs as bright as flowers,
Ink-spotted over, shells of green and blue;
And there I witnessed, in the summer hours,
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

The Primrose

WELCOME, pale primrose! starting up between
Dead matted leaves of ash and oak that strew
The every lawn, the wood, and spinney through,
Mid creeping moss and ivy's darker green;
How much thy presence beautifies the ground!
How sweet thy modest unaffected pride
Glows on the sunny bank and wood's warm side!
And where thy fairy flowers in groups are found,
The school-boy roams enchantedly along,
Plucking the fairest with a rude delight:
While the meek shepherd stops his simple song,
To gaze a moment on the pleasing sight;
O'erjoyed to see the flowers that truly bring
The welcome news of sweet returning spring.

JOHN KEATS

ENGLAND, 1795-1821

JOHN RUSKIN, confessing admiration for the poetry of Keats, says: "I dare not read him, so discontented he makes me with my own work." And Sidney Colvin voices a quite prevalent opinion in saying that "by power, as well as by temperament and aim, Keats was the most Shakespearean spirit that has lived since Shakespeare." In no poetry is the personality of the writer more manifest than in that of Keats: in none does the ideal creation spring more evidently from introspection and self-consciousness. His character—his strengths and weaknesses—determined his method of composition, as his method of composition imposed a limitation on his genius. A certain morbidness of fancy—due in great part to physical causes—haunted him. By a kind of incessant love-longing, he was driven to shun the realities of life and to find an asylum in the regions of imagination.

By many appraisers of poetry, including Coventry Patmore, Keats's *La Belle Dame sans Merci* is considered as probably "the finest lyric in the English language." Richard Le Gallienne recently bestowed upon it this honor. In Swinburne's estimation, poetic supremacy belongs to the great *Ode to a Nightingale*. Others put the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* in the same lofty category. By the way, Byron thought the *Hyperion* to be of Æschylean sublimity. To me, Keats has to his credit no performance more magical than his *Eve of St. Agnes*.

Of his *Endymion*, published in 1818, the *Edinburgh Quarterly Review* made the famous critical statement which is said to have affected Keats fatally: "We have not been able to struggle beyond the first of the four books of which this Poetic Romance consists. We should

JOHN KEATS

extremely lament this want of energy, or whatever it may be, on our parts, were it not for one consolation—namely, that we are no better acquainted with the meaning of the book through which we have so painfully toiled, than we are with that of the three which we have not looked into. It is not that Mr. Keats (if that be his real name, for we almost doubt that any man in his senses would put his real name to such a rhapsody) it is not, we say, that the author has not powers of language, rays of fancy, and gleams of genius—he has all these; but he is unhappily a disciple of the new school of what has been somewhere called Cockney poetry, which may be defined to consist of the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language.” The effect of this violent attack upon the susceptible poet resulted, Shelley records, in a pulmonary rupture: a rapid consumption ensued; and the succeeding recognition of his rare genius was ineffectual to heal the wound the careless pen had inflicted. But we now know that Shelley was wrong in his surmise: Keats’s ailment was hereditary.

There never was a poet more radiant in genius, more rich in promise. It is good to know that the heart of the world has finally turned to him. “He has his star at last.” He is now with the deathless ones—

“Bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan.”

JOHN KEATS

Ode to a Nightingale

MY heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,

But being too happy in thy happiness,

That thou, light-wingèd Dryad of the trees,

In some melodious plot

Of beechen green and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been

Cooled a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,

Tasting of Flora and the country-green,

Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!

O for a beaker full of the warm South!

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

And purple-stainèd mouth;

That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,

And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow

And leaden-eyed despairs;

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

JOHN KEATS

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy
ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a musèd rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

JOHN KEATS

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music—do I wake or sleep?

Ode on a Grecian Urn

THOU still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

JOHN KEATS

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou has not thy bliss,
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede
Of inarble men and maidens overwrought,

JOHN KEATS

With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

Ode to Psyche

O GODDESS! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
Even into thine own soft-conchèd ear:
Surely I dreamed to-day, or did I see
The wingèd Psyche with awakened eyes?
I wandered in a forest thoughtlessly,
And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couchèd side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whispering roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hushed, cool-rooted flowers fragrant-eyed,
Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
Their arms embracèd, and their pinions too;
Their lips touched not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoinèd by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:
The wingèd boy I knew;
But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
His Psyche true!

JOHN KEATS

O latest-born and loveliest vision far
Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-regioned star,
Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
Nor altar heaped with flowers;
Nor Virgin-choir to make delicious moan
Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retired
From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
From swung censer teeming:
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
Of pale-mouthed prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant
pain,
Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Far, far around shall those dark-clustered trees

JOHN KEATS

Fledge the wild-ridgèd mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams and birds and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lulled to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreathed trellis of a working brain,
With buds and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same;
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
To let the warm Love in!

Ode to Autumn

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by a winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,

JOHN KEATS

Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozy hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music, too,
While barrèd clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Ode on Melancholy

NO, no! go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kist
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

JOHN KEATS

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globèd peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous
tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Fragment of an Ode to Maia

(WRITTEN ON MAY-DAY, 1818)

Here is a lyric worth saving if only for the one immortal line,

"Leaving great verse unto a little clan."

MOTHER of Hermes! and still youthful Maia!
May I sing to thee
As thou wast hymnèd on the shores of Baiæ?
Or may I woo thee

JOHN KEATS

In earlier Sicilian? or thy smiles
Seek as they once were sought, in Grecian isles,
By bards who died content on pleasant sward,
Leaving great verse unto a little clan?
O give me their old vigor! and unheard
Save of the quiet primrose, and the span
Of heaven, and few ears,
Rounded by thee, my song should die away
Content as theirs,
Rich in the simple worship of a day.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth

WRITTEN ON THE BLANK PAGE BEFORE BEAUMONT AND
FLETCHER'S TRAGI-COMEDY "THE FAIR MAID OF THE INN"

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains wondrous,
And the parle of voices thunderous;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Browsed by none but Dian's fawns;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,
And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing

JOHN KEATS

Not a senseless, trancèd thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumbered, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!

La Belle Dame sans Merci

AH, what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

JOHN KEATS

Ah, what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

I set her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna-dew,
And sure in language strange she said,
"I love thee true!"

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore;
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

JOHN KEATS

And there she lullèd me asleep,
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill's side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
Who cried—"La belle Dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

I saw their starved lips in the gloom
With horrid warning gapèd wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hill's side.

And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

The last four lines of this famous sonnet form one of the most tremendous climaxes in literature. Yet it contains a glaring misstatement, in crediting Cortez, instead of Balboa, with the discovery of the Pacific Ocean.

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told

JOHN KEATS

That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

The Grasshopper and Cricket

THE poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead:
That is the grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury, he has never done
With his delights, for, when tired out with fun,
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

JOHN KEATS

Last Sonnet

BRIGHT Star, would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—

No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

SOULS of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Dressed as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse from horn and can.

JOHN KEATS

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new old sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

In a Drear-nighted December

IN a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them,
With a sleety whistle through them;
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting,

JOHN KEATS

They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never petting
About the frozen time.

Ah! would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writhed not at passèd joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it,
Nor numbèd sense to steal it,
Was never said in rhyme.

The Eve of St. Agnes

I

ST. AGNES' Eve—ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees;

JOHN KEATS

The sculptured dead, on each side, seemed to freeze,
Imprisoned in black, purgatorial rails;
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his death-bell rung;
The joys of all his life were said and sung;
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve;
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft:
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide;
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests;
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their
breasts.

V

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
The brain, new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away;
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

VII

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline;
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard; her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all; in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired, not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not; her heart was elsewhere;
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

JOHN KEATS

VIII

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short;
The hallowed hour was near at hand; she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
Mid looks of love, defiance, hate and scorn,
Hoodwinked with fairy fancy; all amorn
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline;
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things
have been.

X

He ventures in; let no buzzed whisper tell;
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, love's feverous citadel;
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage; not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

JOHN KEATS

XI

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling alone with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland.
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place:
They are all here to-night, the whole bloodthirsty race!"

XII

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursèd thee and thine, both house and land,
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away!"—"Ah, gossip dear,
We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,
And tell me how—" "Good saints, not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

XIII

He followed through a lowly archèd way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume:
And as she muttered "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he;
"O, tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

JOHN KEATS

XIV

“St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes’ Eve,
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch’s sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the elves and fays,
To venture so. It fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes’ Eve!
God’s help! my lady fair the conjurer plays
This very night; good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I’ve mickle time to grieve.”

XV

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an agèd crone
Who keepeth closed a wondrous riddle-book,
As spectacted she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady’s purpose; and he scarce could brook
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his painèd heart
Made purple riot; then doth he propose
A stratagem that makes the beldame start;
“A cruel man and impious thou art!
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go! I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.”

JOHN KEATS

XVII

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear!"
Quoth Porphyro; "O, may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than
wolves and bears."

XVIII

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never missed." Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride;
While legioned fairies paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

JOHN KEATS

XX

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the dame;
"All cates and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night; by the tambour frame
Her own lute thou wilt see; no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience kneel in prayer
The while. Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

XXI

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed:
The dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmèd maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware;
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the agèd gossip led
To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed!
She comes, she comes again, like a ring-dove frayed and
fled.

JOHN KEATS

XXIII

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died;
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide;
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled in her dell.

XXIV

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imageries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and
kings.

XXV

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for Heaven's grace and boon:
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint;
She seemed a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven. Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

JOHN KEATS

XXVI

Anon his heart revives; her vespers done,
Of all its wreathèd pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmèd jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees.
Half hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the poppièd warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothèd limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII

Stolen to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself; then from the closet crept,
Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushed carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast
she slept.

JOHN KEATS

XXIX

Then by the bedside, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet.
O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanchèd linen, smooth and lavendered;
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince and plum and gourd,
With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez; and spicèd dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon.

XXXI

These delicacies he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathèd silver. Sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.
"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite;
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

JOHN KEATS

XXXII

Thus whispering, his warm, unnervèd arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains: 'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as icèd stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mused awhile, entoiled in woofèd fantasies.

XXXIII

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,
Tumultuous, and, in chords that tenderest be,
He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called "La belle Dame sans merci",
Close to her ear touching the melody—
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan;
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayèd eyes wide open shone;
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep.
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep;
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep.
Who knelt, with joinèd hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

JOHN KEATS

XXXV

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tunable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear.
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
O, leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

XXXVI

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose:
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odor with the violet—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII

'Tis dark; quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet;
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark; the icèd gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing—
A dove forlorn and lost, with sick, unpruned wing."

JOHN KEATS

XXXVIII

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest,
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

XXXIX

"Hark! 't is an elfin-storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand—
The bloated wassaillers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see—
Drowned all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL

She hurried at his words, beset with fears.
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

JOHN KEATS

XLI

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall!
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side.
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns;
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide;
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII

And they are gone! ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform;
The beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

JOHN KEATS

Beauty

FROM "ENDYMION"

A THING of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils,
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms;
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the Heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a Temple becomes soon
Dear as the Temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light

JOHN KEATS

Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

The Forest

FROM "ENDYMION"

UPON the sides of Latmos was outspread
A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.
And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep
A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens,
Never again saw he the happy pens
Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
Over the hills at every nightfall went.
Among the shepherds, 'twas believèd ever
That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
From the white flock, but passed unworrièd
By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,
Until it came to some unfooted plains
Where fed the herds of Pan: ay, great his gains
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of turf and slanting branches; who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edged round with dark tree-tops? through which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.

JOHN KEATS

The Sacrifice to Pan

FROM "ENDYMION"

FULL in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken faery phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
And so the dawnèd light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn; Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
Into the winds; rain-scented eglantine
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun;
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass
Of nature's lives and wonders pulsed ten-fold,
To feel the sunrise and its glories old.

Now, while the silent workings of the dawn
Were busiest, into that self-same lawn
All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped
A troop of little children garlanded,
Who, gathering round the altar, seemed to pry
Earnestly round, as wishing to espy
Some folk of holiday; nor had they waited
For many moments, ere their ears were sated
With a faint breath of music, which even then
Filled out its voice, and died away again.
Within a little space again it gave

JOHN KEATS

Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking
Through copse-clad valleys, ere their death o'ertaking
The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

And now, as deep into the wood as we
Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light
Fair faces, and a rush of garments white,
Plainer and plainer showing, till at last
Into the widest alley they all passed,
Making directly for the woodland altar.
O kindly Muse! let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee;
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul, that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd's song,
Each having a white wicker over-brimmed
With April's tender younglings: next, well-trimmed,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books,
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'erflowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly;
Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tippèd flutes; close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest-trees,
A venerable priest full soberly,

JOHN KEATS

Begirt with ministering looks; alway his eye
Steadfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,
Of mingled wine, outsparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull—
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His agèd head, crownèd with beechen wreath,
Seemed like a poll of ivy in the teeth
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appeared,
Up-followed by a multitude that reared
Their voices to the clouds, a fair-wrought car,
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown:
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftan king's; beneath his breast, half bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen:
A smile was on his countenance; he seemed,
To common lookers-on, like one who dreamed
Of idleness in groves Elysian;
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip
Through his forgotten hands; then would they sigh
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,
Of logs piled solemnly. Ah, well-a-day!
Why should our young Endymion pine away?

JOHN KEATS

Soon the assembly, in a circle ranged,
Stood silent round the shrine; each look was changed
To sudden veneration; women meek
Beckoned their sons to silence; while each cheek
Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.
Endymion, too, without a forest peer,
Stood, wan and pale, and with an awèd face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy, from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his agèd hands,
Thus spake he: "Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From valleys where the pipe is never dumb;
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs
Blue harebells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibbled their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touched with sounds forlorn
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn;
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip with needments for the mountain air,
And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup
Will put choice honey for a favored youth:
Yea, every one attend! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains
Greened over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.

JOHN KEATS

The earth is glad: the merry lark has poured
His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heaped a spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire;
Anon he stained the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honor of the shepherd-god.
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay-leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

A Hymn to Pan

FROM "ENDYMION"

O THOU whose mighty palace roof doth hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow!
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

JOHN KEATS

“O thou for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles
Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side
Of thine enmossèd realms: O thou to whom
Broad-leavèd fig-trees even now foredoom
Their ripened fruitage; yellow-girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest blossomed beans and poppied corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low-creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent-up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh-budding year
All its completions—be quickly near,
By every wind that nods the mountain-pine,
O forester divine!

“Thou to whom every fawn and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half-sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewildered shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak-apples, and fir-cones brown,—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king!

JOHN KEATS

"O Harkener to the loud-clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers
A ram goes bleating! Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsman! Breather round our farms,
To keep off mildews and all weather harms!
Strange ministrant of undescribèd sounds,
That come a-swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors!
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge!—see,
Great son of Dryope,
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!

"Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea;
An element filling the space between;
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven-rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble pæan,
Upon thy Mount Lycean!"

JOHN KEATS

Diana

FROM "ENDYMION"

A BRIGHT something, sailing down apace,
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face:
Again I looked, and, O ye deities,
Who from Olympus watch our destinies!
Whence that completed form of all completeness?
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, oh! where
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair?
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun;
Not—thy soft hand, fair sister! let me shun
Such follying before thee—yet she had,
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad;
And they were simply gordianed up and braided,
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded
Her pearl-round ears, white neck, and orbèd brow;
The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a Paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half-smiles, and faintest sighs,
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings
And plays about its fancy, till the stings
Of human neighborhood envenom all.
Unto what awful power shall I call?
To what high fane?—Ah! see her hovering feet,
More bluely veined, more soft, more whitely sweet
Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind outblows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion;
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed
Over the darkest, lushest bluebell bed,
Handfuls of daisies.

JOHN KEATS

She took an airy range,
And then, towards me, like a very maid
Came blushing, waning, willing and afraid,
And pressed me by the hand. Ah! 'twas too much;
Methought I fainted at the charmed touch.

Sleep

FROM "ENDYMION"

O MAGIC sleep! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind
Till it is hushed and smooth! O unconfined
Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,
Echoing grottoes, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight; ay, to all the mazy world
Of silvery enchantment!—who, upfurled
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
But renovates and lives?

Cast Asleep

FROM "ENDYMION"

AFTER a thousand mazes overgone,
At last, with sudden step, he came upon
A chamber, myrtle walled, embowered high,
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
And more of beautiful and strange beside:
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fondest beauty; fonder, in fair sooth,

JOHN KEATS

Than sighs could fathom or contentment reach:
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—
Not hiding up an Apollonian curve
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light;
But rather, giving them to the filled sight
Officiously. Sideway his face reposed
On one white arm, and tenderly unclosed,
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
To slumbery pout; just as the morning south
Disparts a dew-lipped rose. Above his head,
Four lily-stalks did their white honors wed
To make a coronal; and round him grew
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwined and trammelled fresh:
The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh,
Shading its Æthiop berries; and woodbine,
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine;
Convolvulus in streakèd vases flush;
The creeper mellowing for an autumn blush;
And virgin's-bower, trailing airily;
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,
Stood serene Cupids watching silently.
One, kneeling to a lyre, touched the strings,
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings;
And, ever and anon, uprose to look
At the youth's slumber; while another took
A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,
And shook it on his hair; another flew
In through the woven roof, and, fluttering-wise,
Rained violets upon his sleeping eyes.

JOHN KEATS

From "Hyperion"

A FRAGMENT

I

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-haired Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feathered grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Pressed her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large footmarks went,
No further than to where his feet had strayed,
And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground
His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead,
Unscathed; and his realmless eyes were closed;
While his bowed head seemed listening to the Earth,
His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seemed no force could wake him from his place;
But there came one, who with a kindred hand
Touched his wide shoulders, after bending low
With reverence, though to one who knew it not.
She was a Goddess of the infant world;

JOHN KEATS

By her in stature the tall Amazon
Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have taken
Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;
Or with a finger stayed Ixion's wheel.
Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx,
Pedestaled haply in a palace court,
When sages looked to Egypt for their lore.
But oh! how unlike marble was that face:
How beautiful, if sorrow had not made
Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self.
There was a listening fear in her regard,
As if calamity had but begun:
As if the vanward clouds of evil days
Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear
Was with its stored thunder laboring up.
One hand she pressed upon that aching spot
Where beats the human heart, as if just there,
Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain;
The other upon Saturn's bended neck
She laid, and to the level of his ear
Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake
In solemn tenor and deep organ tone:
Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue
Would come in these like accents; O how frail
To that large utterance of the early Gods!

"Saturn, look up!—though wherefore, poor old King?
I have no comfort for thee, no not one:
I cannot say, 'O wherefore sleepest thou?'
For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth
Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God;
And ocean too, with all its solemn noise,
Has from thy sceptre passed; and all the air
Is emptied of thine hoary majesty.
Thy thunder, conscious of the new command,

JOHN KEATS

Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house:
And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands
Scorches and burns our once serene domain.
O aching time! O moments big as years!
All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth,
And press it so upon our weary griefs
That unbelief has not a space to breathe.
Saturn, sleep on: O thoughtless, why did I
Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude?
Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?
Saturn, sleep on! while at thy feet I weep."

As when, upon a tranced summer-night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmèd by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave;
So came these words and went; the while in tears
She touched her fair large forehead to the ground.

* * * * *

Even now, while Saturn, roused from icy trance,
Went step for step with Thea through the woods,
Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear,
Came slope upon the threshold of the west;
Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope
In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes,
Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet
And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies;
And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape,
In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye,
That inlet to severe magnificence
Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

JOHN KEATS

He entered, but he entered full of wrath;
His flaming robes streamed out beyond his heels,
And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire.
That scared away the meek ethereal Hours
And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared,
From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault,
Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades,
Until he reached the great main cupola;
There standing fierce beneath, he stamped his foot,
And from the basements deep to the high towers
Jarred his own golden region; and before
The quavering thunder thereupon had ceased,
His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb,
To this result: "O dreams of day and night!
O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain!
O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom!
O lank-eared Phantoms of black-weeded pools
Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why
Is my eternal essence thus distraught
To see and to behold these horrors new?
Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall?
Am I to leave this haven of my rest,
This cradle of my glory, this soft clime,
This calm luxuriance of blissful light,
These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes,
Of all my lucent empire? It is left
Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine.
The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry,
I cannot see—but darkness, death and darkness.
Even here, into my centre of repose,
The shady visions come to domineer,
Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.
Fall!—No, by Tellus and her briny robes!
Over the fiery frontier of my realms

JOHN KEATS

I will advance a terrible right arm
Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove,
And bid old Saturn take his throne again."

He spake, and ceased, the while a heavier threat
Held struggle with his throat but came not forth;
For as in theatres of crowded men
Hubbub increases more they call out "Hush!"
So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale
Bestirred themselves, thrice horrible and cold;
And from the mirrored level where he stood
A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh.
At this, through all his bulk an agony
Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown,
Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular
Making slow way, with head and neck convulsed
From over-strained might. Released, he fled
To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours
Before the dawn in season due should blush,
He breathed fierce breath against the sleepy portals,
Cleared them of heavy vapors, burst them wide
Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams.
The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode
Each day from east to west the heavens through,
Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds:
Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid,
But ever and anon the glancing spheres,
Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure,
Glowed through, and wrought upon the muffling dark
Sweet-shapèd lightnings from the nadir deep
Up to the zenith—hieroglyphics old,
Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers
Then living on the earth, with laboring thought
Won from the gaze of many centuries:
Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge

JOHN KEATS

Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone,
Their wisdom long since fled.—Two wings this orb
Possessed for glory, two fair argent wings,
Ever exalted at the God's approach:
And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense
Rose, one by one, till all outspread were;
While still the dazzling globe maintained eclipse,
Awaiting for Hyperion's command.
Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne
And bid the day begin, if but for change.
He might not: No, though a primeval God:
The sacred seasons might not be disturbed.
Therefore the operations of the dawn
Stayed in their birth, even as here 'tis told.
Those silver wings expanded sisterly,
Eager to sail their orb; the porches wide
Opened upon the dusk demesnes of night;
And the bright Titan, frenzied with new woes,
Unused to bend, by hard compulsion bent
His spirit to the sorrow of the time;
And all along a dismal rack of clouds,
Upon the boundaries of day and night,
He stretched himself in grief and radiance faint.
There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars
Looked down on him with pity, and the voice
Of Cœlus, from the universal space,
Thus whispered low and solemn in his ear.

“O brightest of my children dear, earth-born
And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries
All unrevealed even to the powers
Which met at thy creating; at whose joy
And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft,
I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence;
And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be,

JOHN KEATS

Distinct, and visible; symbols divine,
Manifestations of that beauteous life
Diffused unseen throughout eternal space;
Of these new-formed art thou, oh brightest child!
Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses!
There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion
Of son against his sire. I saw him fall,
I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne!
To me his arms were spread, to me his voice
Found way from forth the thunders round his head!
Pale wox I and in vapors hid my face.
Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is:
For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods.
Divine ye were created, and divine
In sad demeanor, solemn, undisturbed,
Unruffled, like high Gods, ye lived and ruled:
Now I behold in you fear, hope and wrath;
Actions of rage and passion; even as
I see them, on the mortal world beneath,
In men who die. This is the grief, O Son!
Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall!
Yet do thou strive; as thou art capable,
As thou canst move about, an evident God;
And canst oppose to each malignant hour
Ethereal presence: I am but a voice;
My life is but the life of winds and tides,
No more than winds and tides can I avail:
But thou canst. Be thou therefore in the van
Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb
Before the tense string murmur. To the earth!
For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes.
Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun,
And of thy seasons be a careful nurse."

JOHN KEATS

Ere half this region-whisper had come down,
Hyperion arose, and on the stars
Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide
Until it ceased; and still he kept them wide:
And still they were the same bright, patient stars.
Then with a slow incline of his broad breast,
Like to a diver in the pearly seas,
Forward he stooped over the airy shore,
And plunged all noiseless into the deep night.

II

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings
Hyperion slid into the rustled air,
And Saturn gained with Thea that sad place
Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourned.
It was a den where no insulting light
Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans
They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar
Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse,
Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where.
Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seemed
Ever as if just rising from a sleep,
Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns;
And thus in thousand hugest phantasies
Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe.
Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon,
Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge
Stubborned with iron. All were not assembled:
Some chained in torture, and some wandering.
Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs,
Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyryon,
With many more, the brawniest in assault,
Were pent in regions of laborious breath;
Dungeoned in opaque element, to keep

JOHN KEATS

Their clenched teeth still clenched, and all their limbs
Locked up like veins of metal, cramped and screwed;
Without a motion, save of their big hearts
Heaving in pain, and horribly convulsed
With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse.
Mnemosyne was straying in the world;
Far from her moon had Phœbe wanderèd;
And many else were free to roam abroad,
But for the main, here found they covert drear.
Scarce images of life, one here, one there,
Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque
Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor.
When the chill rain begins at shut of eve,
In dull November, and their chancel vault,
The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night.
Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbor gave
Or word, or look, or action of despair.
Creüs was one; his ponderous iron mace
Lay by him, and a shattered rib of rock
Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined.
Iäpetus another; in his grasp,
A serpent's plashy neck; its barbed tongue
Squeezed from the gorge, and all its uncurled length
Dead; and because the creature could not spit
Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove.
Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost,
As though in pain; for still upon the flint
He ground severe his skull, with open mouth
And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him
Asia, born of most enormous Caf,
Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs,
Though feminine, than any of her sons:
More thought than woe was in her dusky face,
For she was prophesying of her glory;
And in her wide imagination stood

JOHN KEATS

Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes,
By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles.
Even as Hope upon her anchor leans,
So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk
Shed from the broadest of her elephants.
Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelf,
Upon his elbow raised, all prostrate else.
Shadowed Enceladus; once tame and mild
As grazing ox unworried in the meads;
Now tiger-passioned, lion-thoughted, wroth,
He meditated, plotted, and even now
Was hurling mountains in that second war,
Not long delayed, that scared the younger Gods
To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird.
Nor far hence Atlas; and beside him prone
Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbored close
Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap
Sobbed Clymene among her tangled hair.
In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet
Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight;
No shape distinguishable, more than when
Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds:
And many else whose names may not be told.
For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread,
Who shall delay her flight? And she must chant
Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd
With damp and slippery footing from a depth
More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff
Their heads appeared, and up their stature grew
Till on the level height their steps found ease:
Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms
Upon the precincts of this nest of pain,
And sidelong fixed her eye on Saturn's face:
There saw she direst strife; the supreme God
At war with all the frailty of grief,

JOHN KEATS

Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge,
Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair.
Against these plagues he strove in vain; for Fate
Had poured a mortal oil upon his head,
A disanointing poison: so that Thea,
Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass
First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart
Is persecuted more, and fevered more,
When it is nighing to the mournful house
Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise;
So Saturn, as he walked into the midst,
Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest,
But that he met Enceladus's eye,
Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once
Came like an inspiration; and he shouted,
"Titans, behold your God!" at which some groaned;
Some started on their feet; some also shouted;
Some wept, some wailed, all bowed with reverence;
And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil,
Showed her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan,
Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes.
There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines
When Winter lifts his voice; there is a noise
Among immortals when a God gives sign,
With hushing finger, how he means to load
His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought,
With thunder, and with music, and with pomp:
Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines;
Which, when it ceases in this mountained world,
No other sound succeeds; but ceasing here,
Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom
Grew up like organ, that begins anew
Its strain, when other harmonies, stopped short.

JOHN KEATS

Leave the din'd air vibrating silverly.
Thus grew it up: "Not in my own sad breast,
Which is its own great judge and searcher out,
Can I find reason why ye should be thus:
Not in the legends of the first of days,
Studied from that old spirit-leavèd book
Which starry Uranus with finger bright
Saved from the shores of darkness, when the waves
Low-ebbed still hid it up in shallow gloom.

* * * * *

"O'erwhelmed, and spurned, and battered, ye are here!
O Titans, shall I say 'Arise!'—Ye groan:
Shall I say 'Crouch!'—Ye groan. What can I then?
O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear!
What can I! Tell me, all ye brethren Gods,
How we can war, how engine our great wrath!"

So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea,
Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove,
But cogitation in his watery shades,
Arose, with locks not oozy, and began,
In murmurs, which his first-endeavoring tongue
Caught infant-like from the far foamed sands.
"O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-stung,
Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies!
Shut up your senses, stifle up your ears,
My voice is not a bellows unto ire.
Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof
How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop;
And in the proof much comfort will I give,
If ye will take that comfort in its truth.
We fall by course of Nature's law, not force
Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou
Hast sifted well the atom-universe;

JOHN KEATS

But for this reason, that thou art the King,
And only blind from sheer supremacy,
One avenue was shaded from thine eyes,
Through which I wandered to eternal truth.
And first, as thou wast not the first of powers,
So art thou not the last; it cannot be:
Thou art not the beginning nor the end.
From chaos and parental darkness came
Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil,
That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends
Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came,
And with it light, and light, engendering
Upon its own producer, forthwith touched
The whole enormous matter into life.
Upon that very hour, our parentage,
The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest:
Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race,
Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms.
Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain;
O folly! for to bear all naked truths,
And to envisage circumstance, all calm,
That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well!
As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far
Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs;
And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth
In form and shape compact and beautiful,
In will, in action free, companionship,
And thousand other signs of purer life;
So on our heels a fresh perfection treads,
A power more strong in beauty, born of us
And fated to excel us, as we pass
In glory that old Darkness: nor are we
Thereby more conquered, than by us the rule
Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull son
Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed,

JOHN KEATS

And feedeth still, more comely than itself?
Can it deny the chieftdom of green groves?
Or shall the tree be envious of the dove
Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings
To wander wherewithal and find its joys?
We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs
Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves,
But eagles golden-feathered, who do tower
Above us in their beauty, and must reign
In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law
That first in beauty should be first in might:
Yea, by that law, another race may drive
Our conquerors to mourn as we do now.
Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My disposessor? Have ye seen his face?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foamed along
By noble wingèd creatures he hath made?
I saw him on the calmèd waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforced me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire: farewell sad I took,
And hither came, to see how dolorous fate
Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best
Give consolation in this woe extreme.
Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

* * * * *

All eyes were on Enceladus's face,
And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name
Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks,
A pallid gleam across his features stern:
Not savage, for he saw full many a God
Wroth as himself. He looked upon them all,
And in each face he saw a gleam of light,
But splendor in Saturn's, whose hoar locks

JOHN KEATS

Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel
When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove.
In pale and silver silence they remained,
Till suddenly a splendor, like the morn,
Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps,
All the sad spaces of oblivion,
And every gulf, and every chasm old,
And every height, and every sullen depth,
Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams:
And all the everlasting cataracts,
And all the headlong torrents far and near,
Mantled before in darkness and huge shade,
Now saw the light and made it terrible.
It was Hyperion—a granite peak
His bright feet touched, and there he stayed to view
The misery his brilliance had betrayed
To the most hateful seeing of itself.
Golden his hair of short Numidian curl,
Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade
In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk
Of Memnon's image at the set of sun
To one who travels from the dusking East:
Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp
He uttered, while his hands contemplative
He pressed together, and in silence stood.
Despondence seized again the fallen Gods
At sight of the dejected King of Day.

III

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace,
Amazèd were those Titans utterly.
O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes;
For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire:
A solitary sorrow best befits

JOHN KEATS

Thy lips, and antheing a lonely grief.
Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find
Many a fallen old Divinity
Wandering in vain about bewildered shores.
Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp,
And not a wind of heaven but will breathe
In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute;
For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse.

GEORGE DARLEY

IRELAND, 1795-1846

The Fallen Star

A STAR is gone! a star is gone!
There is a blank in Heaven;
One of the cherub choir has done
His airy course this even.

He sat upon the orb of fire
That hung for ages there,
And lent his music to the choir
That haunts the nightly air.

GEORGE DARLEY

But when his thousand years are passed,
With a cherubic sigh
He vanished with his car at last,
For even cherubs die!

Hear how his angel-brothers mourn—
The minstrels of the spheres—
Each chiming sadly in his turn
And dropping splendid tears.

The planetary sisters all
Join in the fatal song,
And weep this hapless brother's fall,
Who sang with them so long.

But deepest of the choral band
The Lunar Spirit sings,
And with a bass-according hand
Sweeps all her sullen strings.

From the deep chambers of the dome
Where sleepless Uriel lies,
His rude harmonic thunders come
Mingled with mighty sighs.

The thousand car-borne cherubim,
The wandering eleven,
All join to chant the dirge of him
Who fell just now from Heaven.

THOMAS CARLYLE
SCOTLAND, 1795-1881

To-Day

SO here hath been dawning
Another blue Day:
Think wilt thou let it
Slip useless away?

Out of Eternity
This new Day is born;
Into Eternity,
At night, will return.

Behold it aforetime
No eye ever did:
So soon it for ever
From all eyes is hid.

Here hath been dawning
Another blue Day:
Think, wilt thou let it
Slip useless away?

This Mysterious Mankind

The mighty Thomas—who shook the nineteenth century with his protest and his prophecy—wrote only a few verses, and none of these were of a high order. Yet he was essentially a poet, a king-poet; and his prose pages are shot through with all the glowing fires of a lofty poetry. We get frequent inshinings of the lyric and the epic Muse in

THOMAS CARLYLE

his "French Revolution" and in his "Heroes and Hero-Worship." No poet of any land or of any age has ever surpassed the high import in the marching thunders of this brief passage from his "Sartor Resartus." Ah, the power and the pathos of it all!

GENERATION after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the mill of Industry, one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science, one madly dashed to pieces on the rocks of Strife in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled, his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to Sense becomes a vanished Shadow.

Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane, haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up in our passage: can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped-in: the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence? O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little Life
Is rounded with a sleep."

THOMAS HOOD

ENGLAND, 1798-1845

THOMAS HOOD was born and died in London. His life was one of severe toil and much suffering, always sustained, however, with manly resolution and cheerful spirit. He wrote voluminously, both in verse and prose. He was a man of peculiar and original genius, which manifested itself with equal power and ease in humor and pathos.

His revolutionary *Song of the Shirt* appeared in *Punch* a short time before Hood died, himself a victim of overwork. It was written at a time when the attention of benevolent English men and women had been awakened to the inadequate wages paid to poor needlewomen, and their consequent distress. Its timely appearance, as well as its high literary merit, produced a great effect. It is valuable as an expression of that deep and impassioned sympathy with suffering, which was a leading trait in Hood's nature. His few serious poems are instinct with imagination and true pathos.

The Song of the Shirt

WITH fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch—stitch—stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still, with a voice of dolorous pitch,
She sang the "Song of the Shirt!"

THOMAS HOOD

“Work—work—work!

While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work!

Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's O, to be a slave

Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If THIS is Christian work.

“Work—work—work!

Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work!

Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam and gusset and band,
Band and gusset and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in my dream.

“O men with sisters dear!

O men with mothers and wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stich!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A SHROUD as well as a shirt!

“But why do I talk of death,
That phantom of grisly bone?
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fast I keep:

THOMAS HOOD

O God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

“Work—work—work!
My labor never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw.
A crust of bread—and rags:
A shattered roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

“Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime;
Work—work—work!
As prisoners work for crime!
Band and gusset and seam,
Seam and gusset and band,
Till the heart is sick and the brain benumbed,
As well as the weary hand!

“Work—work—work!
In the dull December light;
And work—work—work!
When the weather is warm and bright;
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show me their sunny backs,
And twit me with the spring.

“O, but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet,
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet!

THOMAS HOOD

For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want,
And the walk that costs a meal!

"O, but for one short hour!
A respite, however brief!
No blessèd leisure for love or hope,
But only time for grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart—
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch—stitch—stitch—
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still, with a voice of dolorous pitch—
Would that its tone could reach the rich—
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

Fair Ines

Pronouncing Hood "one of the most singularly fanciful of poets," Poe says: "His 'Fair Ines' has always for me an inexpressible charm."

O SAW ye not fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest:

THOMAS HOOD

She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

O turn again, fair Ines,
Before the fall of night,
For fear the Moon should shine alone,
And stars unrivalled bright;
And blessèd will the lover be
That walks beneath their light,
And breathes the love against thy cheek
I dare not even write!

Would I had been, fair Ines,
That gallant cavalier,
Who rode so gaily by thy side,
And whispered thee so near!
Were there no bonny dames at home,
Or no true lovers here,
That he should cross the seas to win
The dearest of the dear?

I saw thee, lovely Ines,
Descend along the shore,
With bands of noble gentlemen,
And banners waved before;
And gentle youth and maidens gay,
And snowy plumes they wore:
It would have been a beauteous dream—
If it had been no more!

Alas, alas! fair Ines,
She went away with song,

THOMAS HOOD

With Music waiting on her steps,
And shoutings of the throng;
But some were sad, and felt no mirth,
But only Music's wrong,
In sounds that sang farewell, farewell,
To her you've loved so long.

Farewell, farewell, fair Ines!
That vessel never bore
So fair a lady on its deck,
Nor danced so light before.
Alas for pleasure on the sea,
And sorrow on the shore!
The smile that blessed one lover's heart
Has broken many more!

The Death-bed

WE watched her breathing through
the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.

So silently we seemed to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.

Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.

THOMAS HOOD

For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed—she had
Another morn than ours.

The Bridge of Sighs

Thackeray called this poem "Hood's Corunna, his Heights of Abraham; sickly, weak, wounded, he fell in the full blaze and fame of that great victory." This poem and "The Song of the Shirt" have a permanent place in the language, because of their message as well as their poetry. "The Bridge of Sighs" is the finer of the two, says T. Earle Welby, because "the voluntary death of a dishonored woman is a deeper tragedy than any abomination of sweated labor."

ONE more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly
Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing;
Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.

THOMAS HOOD

Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonor,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home?

Who was her father?
Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other?

THOMAS HOOD

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun!
O, it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood, with amazement,
Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled—
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world!

THOMAS HOOD

In she plunged boldly—
No matter how coldly
 The rough river ran—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
 Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
 Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
 Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
 Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
 Decently, kindly,
Smooth and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
 Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
 Through muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
 Fixed on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurned by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
 Into her rest.
Cross her hands humbly
As if praying dumbly,
 Over her breast!

THOMAS HOOD

Owning her weakness,
Her evil behavior,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Savior!

The Dream of Eugene Aram

'T WAS in the prime of summer time,
An evening calm and cool,
And four-and-twenty happy boys
Came bounding out of school;
There were some that ran, and some that leapt
Like troutlets in a pool.

Away they sped with gamesome minds
And souls untouched by sin;
To a level mead they came, and there
They drave the wickets in:
Pleasantly shone the setting sun
Over the town of Lynn.

Like sportive deer they coursed about,
And shouted as they ran,
Turning to mirth all things of earth
As only boyhood can;
But the usher sat remote from all,
A melancholy man!

His hat was off, his vest apart,
To catch heaven's blessèd breeze;
For a burning thought was in his brow,
And his bosom ill at ease;
So he leaned his head on his hands, and read
The book between his knees.

THOMAS HOOD

Leaf after leaf he turned it o'er,
Nor ever glanced aside—
For the peace of his soul he read that book
In the golden eventide;
Much study had made him very lean,
And pale, and leaden-eyed.

At last he shut the ponderous tome;
With a fast and fervent grasp
He strained the dusky covers close,
And fixed the brazen hasp:
"O God! could I so close my mind,
And clasp it with a clasp!"

Then leaping on his feet upright,
Some moody turns he took—
Now up the mead, then down the mead,
And past a shady nook;
And, lo! he saw a little boy
That pored upon a book.

"My gentle lad, what is 't you read—
Romance or fairy fable?
Or is it some historic page,
Of kings and crowns unstable?"
The young boy gave an upward glance—
"It is 'The Death of Abel.'"

The usher took six hasty strides,
As smit with sudden pain—
Six hasty strides beyond the place,
Then slowly back again;
And down he sat beside the lad,
And talked with him of Cain;

THOMAS HOOD

And, long since then, of bloody men,
Whose deeds tradition saves;
And lonely folk cut off unseen,
And hid in sudden graves;
And horrid stabs, in groves forlorn;
And murders done in caves;

And how the sprites of injured men
Shriek upward from the sod;
Ay, how the ghostly hand will point
To show the burial clod;
And unknown facts of guilty acts
Are seen in dreams from God.

He told how murderers walked the earth
Beneath the curse of Cain—
With crimson clouds before their eyes,
And flames about their brain;
For blood has left upon their souls
Its everlasting stain!

“And well,” quoth he, “I know, for truth,
Their pangs must be extreme—
Woe, woe, unutterable woe!—
Who spill life’s sacred stream!
For why? Methought, last night I wrought
A murder, in a dream!

“One that had never done me wrong—
A feeble man and old;
I led him to a lonely field—
The moon shone clear and cold:
Now here, said I, this man shall die;
And I will have his gold!

THOMAS HOOD

"Two sudden blows with a ragged stick,
And one with a heavy stone,
One hurried gash with a hasty knife—
And then the deed was done:
There was nothing lying at my feet
But lifeless flesh and bone!

"Nothing but lifeless flesh and bone,
That could not do me ill;
And yet I feared him all the more
For lying there so still:
There was a manhood in his look
That murder could not kill!

"And, lo! the universal air
Seemed lit with ghastly flame—
Ten thousand thousand dreadful eyes
Were looking down in blame;
I took the dead man by his hand,
And called upon his name.

"O God! it made me quake to see
Such sense within the slain;
But when I touched the lifeless clay,
The blood gushed out amain!
For every clot a burning spot
Was scorching in my brain!

"My head was like an ardent coal,
My heart as solid ice;
My wretched, wretched soul, I knew,
Was at the Devil's price:
A dozen times I groaned—the dead
Had never groaned but twice.

THOMAS HOOD

"And now, from forth the frowning sky,
From the heaven's topmost height,
I heard a voice—the awful voice
Of the blood-avenging sprite:
'Thou guilty man! take up thy dead,
And hide it from my sight!'

"I took the dreary body up,
And cast it in a stream—
The sluggish water black as ink,
The depth was so extreme:
My gentle boy, remember, this
Is nothing but a dream!

"Down went the corse with a hollow plunge,
And vanished in the pool;
Anon I cleansed my bloody hands,
And washed my forehead cool,
And sat among the urchins young,
That evening, in the school.

"O Heaven! to think of their white souls,
And mine so black and grim!
I could not share in childish prayer,
Nor join in evening hymn;
Like a devil of the pit I seemed,
Mid holy cherubim!

"And Peace went with them, one and all,
And each calm pillow spread;
But Guilt was my grim chamberlain,
That lighted me to bed,
And drew my midnight curtains round
With fingers bloody red!

THOMAS HOOD

"All night I lay in agony,
In anguish dark and deep;
My fevered eyes I dared not close,
But stared aghast at Sleep:
For Sin had rendered unto her
The keys of hell to keep!

"All night I lay in agony,
From weary chime to chime;
With one besetting horrid hint
That racked me all the time—
A mighty yearning, like the first
Fierce impulse unto crime—

"One stern tyrannic thought, that made
All other thoughts its slave!
Stronger and stronger every pulse
Did that temptation crave—
Still urging me to go and see
The dead man in his grave!

"Heavily I rose up, as soon
As light was in the sky,
And sought the black accursèd pool
With a wild, misgiving eye;
And I saw the dead in the river-bed,
For the faithless stream was dry.

"Merrily rose the lark, and shook
The dew-drop from its wing;
But I never marked its morning flight,
I never heard it sing:
For I was stooping once again
Under the horrid thing.

THOMAS HOOD

"With breathless speed, like a soul in chase,
I took him up and ran;
There was no time to dig a grave
Before the day began—
In a lonesome wood, with heaps of leaves,
I hid the murdered man!

"And all that day I read in school,
But my thought was elsewhere;
As soon as the midday task was done,
In secret I was there—
And a mighty wind had swept the leaves,
And still the corse was bare!

"Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep—
Or land or sea, though he should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep.

"So wills the fierce avenging sprite,
Till blood for blood atones!
Ay, though he's buried in a cave,
And trodden down with stones,
And years have rotted off his flesh—
The world shall see his bones!

"O God! that horrid, horrid dream
Besets me now awake!
Again—again, with dizzy brain,
The human life I take;
And my red right hand grows raging hot,
Like Cranmer's at the stake.

THOMAS HOOD

"And still no peace for the restless clay
Will weave or mold allow;
The horrid thing pursues my soul—
It stands before me now!"
The fearful boy looked up, and saw
Huge drops upon his brow.

That very night, while gentle sleep
The urchin eyelids kissed,
Two stern-faced men set out from Lynn,
Through the cold and heavy mist;
And Eugene Aram walked between,
With gyves upon his wrist.

From "The Haunted House"

*"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old,
But something ails it now: the place is curst."
From "Hart-Leap Well," by Wordsworth.*

I could find no copy of "The Haunted House" in any anthology, either British or American. So, in order to get it for you, gentle readers, I have cut it (slightly abridged) out of my beloved large-paper copy of the poems of Hood. I find that my choice of this poem is approved, so to speak, by the great Edgar Allen Poe; for he says in his lecture on "The Poetic Principle": "'The Haunted House' is one of the truest poems ever written—one of the most unexceptionable—one of the most thoroughly artistic, both in its theme and in its execution. It is, moreover, powerfully ideal—imaginative."

THOMAS HOOD

I

WITH shattered panes the grassy court was
starred;

The time-worn coping-stone had tumbled after;
And through the ragged roof the sky shone, barred
With naked beam and rafter.

O'er all there hung a shadow and a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

The flower grew wild and rankly as the weed,
Roses with thistles struggled for espial,
And vagrant plants of parasitic breed
Had overgrown the dial.

But, gay or gloomy, steadfast or infirm,
No heart was there to heed the hour's duration;
All times and tides were lost in one long term
Of stagnant desolation.

The wren had built within the porch, she found
Its quiet loneliness so sure and thorough;
And on the lawn—within its turfy mound—
The rabbit made his burrow.

The rabbit wild and gray, that flitted through
The shrubby clumps, and frisked, and sat, and vanished,
But leisurely and bold, as if he knew
His enemy was banished.

THOMAS HOOD

The coot was swimming in the reedy pond,
Beside the water-hen, so soon affrighted;
And in the weedy moat the heron, fond
Of solitude, alighted.

The moping heron, motionless and stiff,
That on a stone, as silently and stilly,
Stood, an apparent sentinel, as if
To guard the water-lily.

No sound was heard, except from far away,
The ringing of the whitewall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chatter of the jay,
That Echo murmured after.

But Echo never mocked the human tongue;
Some weighty crime, that Heaven could not pardon,
A secret curse on that old building hung,
And its deserted garden.

The vine unpruned, and the neglected peach,
Drooped from the wall with which they used to grapple;
And on the cankered tree, in easy reach,
Rotted the golden apple.

The fountain was a-dry—neglect and time
Had marred the work of artisan and mason,
And efts and croaking frogs, begot of slime,
Sprawled in the ruined basin.

The statue, fallen from its marble base,
Amidst the refuse leaves, and herbage rotten,
Lay like the idol of some bygone race,
Its name and rites forgotten.

THOMAS HOOD

On every side the aspect was the same,
All ruined, desolate, forlorn and savage:
No hand or foot within the precinct came
To rectify or ravage.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

II

Oh, very gloomy is the house of woe,
Where tears are falling while the bell is knelling,
With all the dark solemnities which show
That Death is in the dwelling!

But house of woe, and hearse, and sable pall,
The narrow home of the departed mortal,
Ne'er looked so gloomy as that ghostly hall,
With its deserted portal!

The centipede along the threshold crept,
The cobweb hung across in mazy tangle,
And in its winding-sheet the maggot slept,
At every nook and angle.

The keyhole lodged the earwig and her brood;
The emmets of the steps had old possession,
And marched in search of their diurnal food
In undisturbed procession.

THOMAS HOOD

As undisturbed as the prehensile cell
Of moth or maggot, or the spider's tissue;
For never foot upon that threshold fell,
To enter or to issue.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

Howbeit, the door I pushed—or so I dreamed—
Which slowly, slowly gaped—the hinges creaking
With such a rusty eloquence, it seemed
That Time himself was speaking.

But Time was dumb within that mansion old,
Or left his tale to the heraldic banners
That hung from the corroded walls, and told
Of former men and manners.

Those tattered flags, that with the opened door
Seemed the old wave of battle to remember,
While fallen fragments danced upon the floor
Like dead leaves in December.

The startled bats flew out—bird after bird—
The screech-owl overhead began to flutter,
And seemed to mock the cry that she had heard
Some dying victim utter!

A shriek that echoed from the joisted roof,
And up the stair, and further still and further,
Till in some ringing chamber far aloof
It ceased its tale of murder!

THOMAS HOOD

Meanwhile the rusty armor rattled round,
The banner shuddered, and the ragged streamer;
All things the horrid tenor of the sound
Acknowledged with a tremor.

The wood-louse dropped, and rolled into a ball,
Touched by some impulse occult or mechanic;
And nameless beetles ran along the wall
In universal panic.

The subtle spider, that from overhead
Hung like a spy on human guilt and error,
Suddenly turned, and up its slender thread
Ran with a nimble terror.

The very stains and fractures on the wall,
Assuming features solemn and terrific,
Hinted some tragedy of that old hall,
Locked up in hieroglyphic.

Some tale that might, perchance, have solved the doubt,
Wherefore amongst those flags so dull and livid
The banner of the BLOODY HAND shone out,
So ominously vivid.

Some key to that inscrutable appeal,
Which made the very frame of Nature quiver,
And every thrilling nerve and fibre feel
So ague-like a shiver.

If but a rat had lingered in the house,
To lure the thought into a social channel!
But not a rat remained, or tiny mouse,
To squeak behind the panel.

THOMAS HOOD

The floor was redolent of mold and must,
The fungus in the rotten seams had quickened;
While on the oaken table coats of dust
Perennially had thickened.

There was so foul a rumor in the air,
The shadow of a presence so atrocious,
No human creature could have feasted there,
Even the most ferocious.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

III

'Tis hard for human actions to account,
Whether from reason or from impulse only—
But some internal prompting bade me mount
The gloomy stairs and lonely.

Those gloomy stairs, so dark, and damp, and cold,
With odors as from bones and relics carnal,
Deprived of rite, and consecrated mould,
The chapel vault, or charnel.

Those dreary stairs, where with the sounding stress
Of every step so many echoes blended,
The mind, with dark misgivings, feared to guess
How many feet ascended.

THOMAS HOOD

The tempest with its spoils had drifted in,
Till each unwholesome stone was darkly spotted,
As thickly as the leopard's dappled skin,
With leaves that rankly rotted.

The air was thick—and in the upper gloom
The bat—or something in its shape—was winging;
And on the wall, as chilly as a tomb,
The death's-head moth was clinging.

That mystic moth, which, with a sense profound
Of all unholy presence, augurs truly;
And with a grim significance flits round
The taper burning bluely.

Such omens in the place there seemed to be,
At every crooked turn, or on the landing,
The straining eyeball was prepared to see
Some apparition standing.

For over all there hung a cloud of fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

Yet no portentous shape the sight amazed;
Each object plain, and tangible, and valid;
But from their tarnished frames dark figures gazed,
And faces spectre-pallid.

Not merely with the mimic life that lies
Within the compass of art's simulation;
Their souls were looking through their painted eyes
With awful speculation.

THOMAS HOOD

On every lip a speechless horror dwelt;
On every brow the burthen of affliction;
The old ancestral spirits knew and felt
The house's malediction.

Such earnest woe their features overcast,
They might have stirred, or sighed, or wept, or spoken;
But, save the hollow moaning of the blast,
The stillness was unbroken.

No other sound or stir of life was there,
Except my steps in solitary clamber,
From flight to flight, from humid stair to stair,
From chamber into chamber.

Rich hangings, storied by the needle's art,
With Scripture history, or classic fable;
But all had faded, save one ragged part,
Where Cain was slaying Abel.

The silent waste of mildew and the moth
Had marred the tissue with a partial ravage;
But undecaying frowned upon the cloth
Each feature stern and savage.

The sky was pale; the cloud a thing of doubt;
Some hues were fresh, and some decayed and duller;
But still the BLOODY HAND shone strangely out
With vehemence of color!

The BLOODY HAND that with a lurid stain
Shone on the dusty floor, a dismal token,
Projected from the casement's painted pane,
Where all beside was broken.

THOMAS HOOD

The BLOODY HAND significant of crime,
That, glaring on the old heraldic banner,
Had kept its crimson unimpaired by time,
In such a wondrous manner!

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

The death-watch ticked behind the panelled oak,
Inexplicable tremors shook the arras,
And echoes strange and mystical awoke,
The fancy to embarrass.

Prophetic hints that filled the soul with dread,
But through one gloomy entrance pointing mostly,
The while some secret inspiration said,
That chamber is the ghostly!

Across the door no gossamer festoon
Swung pendulous—no web—no dusty fringes,
No silky chrysalis or white cocoon
About its nooks and hinges.

The spider shunned the interdicted room,
The moth, the beetle, and the fly were banished,
And where the sunbeam fell athwart the gloom
The very midge had vanished.

One lonely ray that glanced upon a bed,
As if with awful aim direct and certain,
To show the BLOODY HAND in burning red
Embroidered on the curtain.

THOMAS HOOD

And yet no gory stain was on the quilt—
The pillow in its place had slowly rotted;
The floor alone retained the trace of guilt,
Those boards obscurely spotted.

Obscurely spotted to the door, and thence
With mazy doubles to the grated casement—
O, what a tale they told of fear intense,
Of horror and amazement!

What human creature in the dead of night
Had coursed like hunted hare that cruel distance?
Had sought the door, the window, in his flight,
Striving for dear existence?

What shrieking spirit in that bloody room
Its mortal frame had violently quitted?
Across the sunbeam, with a sudden gloom,
A ghostly shadow flitted.

Across the sunbeam, and along the wall,
But painted on the air so very dimly,
It hardly veiled the tapestry at all,
Or portrait frowning grimly.

O'er all there hung the shadow of a fear;
A sense of mystery the spirit daunted,
And said, as plain as whisper in the ear,
The place is haunted!

THOMAS HOOD

Silence

THERE is a silence where hath been no sound,
There is a silence where no sound may be,
In the cold grave—under the deep, deep sea,
Or in wide desert where no life is found,
Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound;
No voice is hushed—no life treads silently,
But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,
That never spoke, over the idle ground:
But in green ruins, in the desolate walls
Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,
Though the dun fox a wild hyæna calls,
And owls that flit continually between,
Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan—
There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

To Minerva

MY temples throb, my pulses boil,
I'm sick of Song, and Ode, and Ballad:
So, Thyrsis, take the Midnight Oil,
And pour it on a lobster salad.

My brain is dull, my sight is foul,
I cannot write a verse, or read:
Then, Pallas, take away thine Owl,
And let us have a lark instead.

THOMAS KIBBLE HERVEY

SCOTLAND, 1799—?

Cleopatra Embarking on the Cydnus

AFTER A PAINTING BY DERBY

*THE barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Burned on the water: the poop was beaten gold:
Purple the sail, and so perfumèd that
The winds were love-sick with them: the oars were silver,
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made
The water which they beat to follow faster,
As amorous of their strokes. —Shakespeare.*

FLUTES in the sunny air,
And harps in the porphyry halls!
And a low deep hum—like a people's prayer—
With its heart-breathed swells and falls!
And an echo—like the desert's call—
Flung back to the shouting shores!
And the river's ripple, heard through all,
As it plays with the silver oars!
The sky is a gleam of gold!
And the amber breezes float,
Like thoughts to be dreamed of but never told,
Around the dancing boat!

She has stepped on the burning sand,
And the thousand tongues are mute;

THOMAS KIBBLE HERVEY

And the Syrian strikes, with a trembling hand,
The strings of his gilded lute!
And the Æthiop's heart throbs loud and high,
Beneath his white symar;
And the Lybian kneels, as he meets her eye,
Like the flash of an Eastern star!
The gales may not be heard,
Yet the silken streamers quiver,
And the vessel shoots—like a bright-plumed bird—
Away, down the golden river!

Away by the lofty mount!
And away by the lonely shore!
And away by the gushing of many a fount—
Where fountains gush no more!
Oh, for some warning vision there,
Some voice that should have spoken
Of climes to be laid waste and bare,
And glad young spirits broken!
Of waters dried away,
And hope and beauty blasted!
That scenes so fair and hearts so gay
Should be so early wasted!

A dream of other days!
That land is a desert now!
And grief grew up to dim the blaze
Upon that royal brow!
The whirlwind's burning wing hath cast
Blight on the marble plain,
And sorrow—like the simoom—passed
O'er Cleopatra's brain!
For like her fervid clime that bred
Its self-consuming fires,
Her heart—like Indian widows—fed

THOMAS KIBBLE HERVEY

Its own funereal pyres!
Not such the song *her* minstrels sing—
“Live, beauteous, and forever!”
As the vessel darts, with its purple wing.
Away down the golden river!

The Grotto of Egeria

A GUSH of waters!—faint and sweet and wild,
Like the far echo of the voice of years,
The ancient nature, singing to her child
The self-same hymn that lulled the infant spheres!
A spell of song not louder than a sigh,
Yet speaking like a trumpet to the heart,
And thoughts that lift themselves, triumphingly,
Over time—where time has triumphed over art—
As wild-flowers climb its ruins—haunt it still;
While, still, above the consecrated spot,
Lifts up its prophet voice the ancient rill,
And flings its oracles along the grot.
But, where is she, the lady of the stream,
And he whose worship was, and is—a dream?

Silent, yet full of voices!—desolate,
Yet filled with memories, like a broken heart!
Oh! for a vision like to his who sate
With thee, and with the moon and stars, apart,
By the cool fountain, many a livelong even,
That speaks, unheeded, to the desert, now,
When vanished clouds had left the air all heaven,
And all was silent, save the stream and thou,
Egeria!—solemn thought upon his brows,
For all his diadem; thy spirit-eyes
His only homage; and the flitting boughs

THOMAS KIBBLE HERVEY

And birds, alone, between him and the skies!
Each outward sense expanded to a soul,
And every feeling tuned into a truth;
And all the bosom's shattered strings made whole,
And all its worn-out powers retouched with youth,
Beneath thy spell, that chastened while it charmed,
Thy words, that touched the spirit while they taught,
Thy look, that uttered wisdom while it warmed,
And molded fancy in the stamp of thought,
And breathed an atmosphere below, above,
Light to the soul, and to the senses love!

Beautiful dreams! that haunt the younger earth,
In poet's pencil or in minstrel's song,
Like sighs, or rainbows, dying in their birth,
Perceived a moment, and remembered long!
But, no!—bright visions!—fables of the heart!
Not to the past, alone, do ye belong;
Types for all ages—wove when early art
To feeling gave a voice—to truth a tongue!
Oh! what if gods have left the Grecian mount,
And shrines are voiceless on the classic shore,
And lone Egeria by the gushing fount
Waits for her monarch-lover never more—
Who hath not his Egeria?—some sweet thought,
Shrouded and shrined within his heart of hearts,
More closely cherished, and more fondly sought,
Still, as the daylight of the soul departs;
The visioned lady of the spring, that wells
In the green valley of his brighter years,
Or gentle spirit that for ever dwells,
And sings of hope, beside the fount of tears.

THOMAS KIBBLE HERVEY

In the heart's trance—the calenture of mind
That haunts the soul-sick mariner of life,
And paints the fields that he has left behind,
Like green morganas, on the tempest's strife;
In the dim hour when memory—whose song
Is still of buried hope—sings back the dead,
And perished looks and forms—a phantom-throng—
With melancholy eyes and soundless tread,
Like lost Eurydices, from graves, retrack
The long-deserted chambers of the brain,
Until the yearning soul looks fondly back
To clasp them, and they vanish, once again;
At even—when the fight of youth is done,
And sorrow—like the “searchers of the slain,”
Turns up the cold, dead faces, one by one,
Of prostrate joys and wishes—but in vain!
And finds that all is lost, and walks around,
Mid hopes that, each, has perished of its wound;
Then, pale Egeria! to thy moon-lit cave
To cool the spirit's fever in thy wave,
And gather inspiration from thy lyre;
In solemn musings, when the world is still,
To woo a love less fleeting to the breast,
Or lie and dream, beside the prophet-rill
That resteth never, while it whispers rest;
Like Numa, cast earth's cares and crowns aside,
And commune with a spiritual bride!

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

ENGLAND, 1800-1859

MACAULAY was not a poet to the manner born, but made himself a popular writer of superior narrative verse. His standing as an essayist and historian is higher. Nevertheless, his *Lays of Ancient Rome* (1842), celebrating the martial prowess of the Romans, enjoyed an enormous popularity and even today have a charm and immediate delight for almost every healthy young mind. His balladry abounds in ringing stanzas, full of impetuous movement and action.

From "Horatius at the Bridge"

LARS PORSENA of Clusium
By the Nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
Should suffer wrong no more
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
And named a trysting day,
And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west and south and north,
To summon his array.

Fast by the royal standard,
O'erlooking all the war,
Lars Porsena of Clusium
Sat in his ivory car.
By the right wheel rode Mamilius,
Prince of the Latian name;
And by the left false Sextus,
That wrought the deed of shame.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

But when the face of Sextus
Was seen among the foes,
A yell that rent the firmament
From all the town arose.
On the house-tops was no woman
But spat towards him and hissed,
No child but screamed out curses,
And shook its little fist.

But the Consul's brow was sad,
And the Consul's speech was low,
And darkly looked he at the wall,
And darkly at the foe.
"Their van will be upon us
Before the bridge goes down;
And if they once may win the bridge
What hope to save the town?"

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the Gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers,
And the temples of his Gods,

"And for the tender mother
Who dandled him to rest,
And for the wife who nurses
His baby at her breast,
And for the holy maidens
Who feed the eternal flame,
To save them from false Sextus
That wrought the deed of shame?"

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;
I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand on either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"

Then out spake Spurius Lartius;
A Ramnian proud was he:
"Lo, I will stand at thy right hand,
And keep the bridge with thee."
And out spake strong Herminius;
Of Titian blood was he:
"I will abide on thy left side,
And keep the bridge with thee."

"Horatius," quoth the Consul,
"As thou sayest, so let it be."
And straight against that great array
Forth went the dauntless Three.
For Romans in Rome's quarrel
Spared neither land nor gold,
Nor son nor wife, nor limb nor life,
In the brave days of old.

Then none was for a party;
Then all were for the State;
Then the great man helped the poor,
And poor man loved the great;
Then lands were fairly portioned;
Then spoils were fairly sold:
The Romans were like brothers
In the brave days of old.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

Now Roman is to Roman
More hateful than a foe,
And the Tribunes beard the high,
And the Fathers grind the low.
As we wax hot in faction,
In battle we wax cold;
Wherefore men fight not as they fought
In the brave days of old.

Was none who would be foremost
To lead such dire attack:
But those behind cried "Forward!"
And those before cried "Back!"
And backward now and forward
Wavers the deep array;
And on the tossing sea of steel
To and fro the standards reel;
And the victorious trumpet-peal
Dies fitfully away.

Yet one man for one moment
Stood out before the crowd;
Well known was he to all the Three,
And they gave him greeting loud,
"Now welcome, welcome, Sextus!
Now welcome to thy home!
Why dost thou stay and turn away?
Here lies the road to Rome."

Thrice looked he at the city;
Thrice looked he at the dead;
And thrice came on in fury,
And thrice turned back in dread:
And, white with fear and hatred,

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

Scowled at the narrow way
Where, wallowing in a pool of blood,
The bravest Tuscans lay.

But meanwhile axe and lever
Have manfully been plied;
And now the bridge hangs tottering
Above the boiling tide.
"Come back, come back, Horatius!"
Loud cried the Fathers all.
"Back, Lartius! back, Herminius!
Back, ere the ruin fall!"

Back darted Spurius Lartius;
Herminius darted back:
And, as they passed, beneath their feet
They felt the timbers crack.
But when they turned their faces,
And on the farther shore
Saw brave Horatius stand alone,
They would have crossed once more.

But with a crash like thunder
Fell every loosened beam,
And, like a dam, the mighty wreck
Lay right athwart the stream;
And a long shout of triumph
Rose from the walls of Rome,
As to the highest turret-tops
Was splashed the yellow foam.

And, like a horse unbroken
When first he feels the rein,
The furious river struggled hard.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

And tossed his tawny mane,
And burst the curb, and bounded,
Rejoicing to be free,
And whirling down, in fierce career,
Battlement, and plank, and pier,
Rushed headlong to the sea.

Alone stood brave Horatius,
But constant still in mind,
Thrice thirty thousand foes before,
And the broad flood behind.
"Down with him!" cried false Sextus,
With a smile on his pale face.
"Now yield thee," cried Lars Porsena,
"Now yield thee to our grace."

Round turned he, as not deigning
Those craven ranks to see;
Naught spake he to Lars Porsena,
To Sextus naught spake he;
But he saw on Palatinus
The white porch of his home;
And he spake to the noble river
That rolls by the towers of Rome.

"O Tiber! father Tiber!
To whom the Romans pray,
A Roman's life, a Roman's arms,
Take thou in charge this day!"
So he spake, and speaking sheathed
The good sword by his side.
And with his harness on his back,
Plunged headlong in the tide.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

No sound of joy or sorrow
Was heard from either bank;
But friends and foes in dumb surprise,
With parted lips and straining eyes,
Stood gazing where he sank;
And when above the surges
They saw his crest appear,
All Rome sent forth a rapturous cry
And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.

"Curse on him!" quoth false Sextus;
"Will not the villain drown?
But for this stay, ere close of day
We should have sacked the town."
"Heaven help him," quoth Lars Porsena,
"And bring him safe to shore;
For such a gallant feat of arms
Was never seen before."

And now he feels the bottom;
Now on dry earth he stands;
Now round him throng the Fathers
To press his gory hands;
And now, with shouts and clapping,
And noise of weeping loud,
He enters through the River-Gate,
Borne by the joyous crowd.

When the oldest cask is opened,
And the largest lamp is lit;
When the chestnuts glow in the embers,
And the kid turns on the spit;
When young and old in circle

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY

Around the firebrands close;
When the girls are weaving baskets,
And the lads are shaping bows;

When the goodman mends his armor,
And trims his helmet's plume;
When the goodwife's shuttle merrily
Goes flashing through the loom;
With weeping and with laughter
Still is the story told,
How well Horatius kept the bridge
In the brave days of old.

CHARLES WELLS

ENGLAND, 1800?—1879

In the first quarter of the Nineteenth Century, Wells wrote "Joseph and His Brethren," a dramatic poem which fell into oblivion until rescued by Swinburne in 1876. I take the following from some of the purple passages:

Envy

WOULD they be envious, let them be great,
Envy old cities, ancient neighborhoods,
Great men of trust and iron-crownèd kings;
For household envy is a household rat;
Envy of state a devil of some fear.
Even in my sleep my mind doth eat strange food,
Enough to strengthen me against this hate.

CHARLES WELLS

Love

ATTENDANT. Then, madam, you would say
That there is nothing in the world but love?

Phraxanor. Not quite; but I would say the fiery sun
Doth not o'ershine the galaxy so far;
Nor doth a torch within a jewelled mine
Amaze the eye beyond this diamond here
More than the ruddy offices of love
Do glow before the common steps of life.

WILLIAM BARNES

ENGLAND, 1801-1886

Mater Dolorosa

I'D a dream to-night
As I fell asleep,
Oh, the touching sight
Makes me still to weep:
Of my little lad,
Gone to leave me sad,
Ay, the child I had,
But was not to keep.

As in Heaven high,
I my child did seek,
There in train came by
Children fair and meek,
Each in lily white,
With a lamp alight;
Each was clear to sight,
But they did not speak.

WILLIAM BARNES

Then, a little sad,
Came my child in turn,
But the lamp he had,
Oh, it did not burn!
He, to clear my doubt,
Said, half turned about,
"Your tears put it out;
Mother, never mourn."

The Motherless Child

THE zun'd a-zet back t'other night,
But in the zettèn pleäce
The clouds a-reddened by his light,
Still glowed avore my feäce.
An' I've a-lost my Meäry's smile,
I thought; but still I have her chîle
Zoo like her, that my eyes can treäce
The mother's in her daughter's feäce.

O little feäce so near to me,
An' like thy mother's gone; why need I zay,
Sweet night cloud, wi' the glow o' my lost day,
Thy looks be always dear to me!

The zun'd a-zet another night;
But, by the moon on high,
He still did zend us back his light
Below a cwolder sky.

My Meäry's in a better land
I thought, but still her chile's at hand,
An in her chile she'll zend me on
Her love, though she herself's a-gone.

O little chile so near to me,
An like thy mother gone; why need I zay,
Sweet moon, the messenger vrom my lost day,
Thy looks be always dear to me.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

ENGLAND, 1801-1890

Lead, Kindly Light

LEAD, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

LETITIA E. LANDON

ENGLAND, 1802-1838

HERE is a name that once was a toast on every tongue, yet it is now almost forgotten. L. E. L. frequently had the weakness of indulging in sentimentality—the overdoing of sentiment. But she sometimes rises to a more restrained and artistic expression. We feel this in her earnest outcry against the slavery of the little children in the factories of mid-Victorian England—an outcry that even at this late hour is sadly needed in many sections of our own industrial America. How persistent in this world are the evils that prosper the pockets of a few!

From "The Factory"

'Tis an accursed thing.

THERE rests a shade above yon town,
A dark, funereal shroud:
'Tis not the tempest hurrying down,
'Tis not a summer cloud.

The smoke that rises on the air
Is as a type and sign;
A shadow flung by the despair
Within those streets of thine. . .

There rises on the morning wind
A low, appealing cry,
A thousand children are resigned
To sicken and to die!

LETITIA E. LANDON

We read of Moloch's sacrifice,
We sicken at the name,
And seem to hear the infant cries—
And yet we cause the same—

And worse: 'twas but a moment's pain
The heathen altar gave,
But we give years—our idol, Gain,
Demands a living grave!

Look on yon child, it droops the head,
Its knees are bowed with pain;
It mutters from its wretched bed,
"Oh, let me sleep again!"

Alas! 'tis time, the mother's eyes
Turn mournfully away;
Alas! 'tis time, the child must rise,
And yet it is not day.

The lantern's lit—she hurries forth,
The spare cloak's scanty fold,
Scarce screens her from the snowy north,
The child is pale and cold.

And wearily the little hands
Their task accustomed ply;
While daily, some 'mid those pale bands
Droop, sicken, pine and die.

Good God! to think upon a child
That has no childish days,
No careless play, no frolics wild,
No words of prayer and praise!

LETITIA E. LANDON

Man from the cradle—'tis too soon
To earn their daily bread.
And heap the heat and toil of noon
Upon an infant's head.

To labor ere their strength be come,
Or starve—is such the doom
That makes of many an English home
One long and living tomb?

Is there no pity from above—
No mercy in those skies?
Hath then the heart of man no love,
To spare such sacrifice?

O England! though thy tribute waves
Proclaim thee great and free,
While those small children pine like slaves,
There is a curse on thee!

Necessity

IN the ancestral presence of the dead
Sits a lone power—a veil upon the head,
Stern with the terror of an unseen dread.

It sitteth cold, immutable and still,
Girt with eternal consciousness of ill,
And strong and silent as its own dark will.

We are the victims of its iron rule,
The warm and beating human heart its tool;
And man, immortal, godlike, but its fool.

We know not of its presence, though its power
Be on the gradual round of every hour,
Now flinging down an empire, now a flower.

LETITIA E. LANDON

And all things small and careless are its own,
Unwittingly the seed minute is sown,
The tree of evil out of it is grown.

At times we see and struggle with our chain,
And dream that somewhat we are freed, in vain;
The mighty fetters close on us again.

We mock our actual strength with lofty thought,
And towers that look into the heavens are wrought,
But after all our toil the task is naught.

Down comes the stately fabric, and the sands
Are scattered with the work of myriad hands,
High o'er whose pride the fragil wild-flower stands.

Such are the wreck of nations and of kings,
Far in the desert, where the palm-tree springs;
'Tis the same story in all meaner things.

The heart builds up its hopes, though not addressed
To meet the sunset glories of the west,
But garnered in some still, sweet-singing nest.

But the dark power is on its noiseless way,
The song is silent so sweet yesterday
And not a green leaf lingers on the spray.

We mock ourselves with freedom and with hope,
The while our feet glide down life's faithless slope;
One has no strength, the other has no scope.

So we are flung on time's tumultuous wave,
Forced there to struggle, but denied to save,
Till the stern tide ebbs—and there is the grave.

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

ENGLAND, 1802-1839

The Vicar

SOME years ago, ere time and taste
Had turned our parish topsy-turvy,
When Darnel Park was Darnel Waste,
And roads as little known as scurvy,
The man who lost his way, between
St. Mary's Hill and Sandy Thicket,
Was always shown across the green,
And guided to the Parson's wicket.

Back flew the bolt of lissom lath;
Fair Margaret, in her tidy kirtle,
Led the lorn traveller up the path,
Through clean-clipt rows of box and myrtle;
And Don and Sancho, Tramp and Tray,
Upon the parlor steps collected,
Wagged all their tails, and seemed to say—
“Our master knows you—you're expected.”

Uprose the Reverend Dr. Brown,
Uprose the Doctor's winsome marrow;
The lady laid her knitting down,
Her husband clasped his ponderous Barrow;
Whate'er the stranger's caste or creed,
Pundit or Papist, saint or sinner,
He found a stable for his steed,
And welcome for himself, and dinner.

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

If, when he reached his journey's end,
And warmed himself in Court or College,
He had not gained an honest friend
And twenty curious scraps of knowledge;
If he departed as he came,
With no new light on love or liquor—
Good sooth, the traveller was to blame,
And not the Vicarage, nor the Vicar.

His talk was like a stream, which runs
With rapid change from rocks to roses:
It slipped from politics to puns,
It passed from Mahomet to Moses;
Beginning with the laws which keep
The planets in their radiant courses,
And ending with some precept deep
For dressing eels, or shoeing horses.

He was a shrewd and sound Divine,
Of loud Dissent the mortal terror;
And when, by dint of page and line,
He 'stablished Truth, or startled Error,
The Baptist found him far too deep;
The Deist sighed with saving sorrow;
And the lean Levite went to sleep,
And dreamed of tasting pork to-morrow.

His sermon never said or showed
That Earth is foul, that Heaven is gracious,
Without refreshment on the road
From Jerome, or from Athanasius:
And sure a righteous zeal inspired
The hand and head that penned and planned them,
For all who understood admired,
And some who did not understand them.

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

He wrote, too, in a quiet way,
Small treatises, and smaller verses,
And sage remarks on chalk and clay,
And hints to noble Lords—and nurses;
True histories of last year's ghost,
Lines to a ringlet, or a turban,
And trifles for the Morning Post,
And nothings for Sylvanus Urban.

He did not think all mischief fair,
Although he had a knack of joking;
He did not make himself a bear,
Although he had a taste for smoking;
And when religious sects ran mad,
He held, in spite of all his learning,
That if a man's belief is bad,
It will not be improved by burning.

And he was kind, and loved to sit
In the low hut or garnished cottage,
And praise the farmer's homely wit,
And share the widow's homelier pottage!
At his approach complaint grew mild;
And when his hand unbarred the shutter,
The clammy lips of fever smiled
The welcome which they could not utter.

He always had a tale for me
Of Julius Cæsar, or of Venus;
From him I learnt the rule of three,
Cat's cradle, leap-frog, and *Quæe genus*:
I used to singe his powdered wig,
To steal the staff he put such trust in,
And make the puppy dance a jig,
When he began to quote Augustine.

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED

Alack the change! in vain I look
For haunts in which my boyhood trifled—
The level lawn, the trickling brook,
The trees I climbed, the beds I rifled:
The church is larger than before;
You reach it by a carriage entry;
It holds three hundred people more,
And pews are fitted up for gentry.

Sit in the Vicar's seat: you'll hear
The doctrine of a gentle Johnian,
Whose hand is white, whose tone is clear,
Whose phrase is very Ciceronian.
Where is the old man laid? Look down,
And construe on the slab before you,
Hic jacet GVLIELMVS BROWN,
Vir nullâ non donandus lauru.

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

IRELAND, 1803-1849

IT would not be fair to judge Mangan by anything but his few supreme achievements; to exalt unduly his lesser achievements is to endanger the just fame of the poet at his loftiest and loveliest height. He is at his best when ancient Ireland speaks to him of her glories, her sorrows, her hopes. Above all, he is the author of that imperishable poem of inspired patriotism, *Dark Rosaleen*.

Mangan states that this impassioned song (entitled, in the Irish original, *Roisin Dubh*, or The Black-Haired Little Rose) was written in the reign of Queen Elizabeth by one of the poets of the celebrated Tyrconnellian chieftain, Hugh the Red O'Donnell. It purports to be an allegorical address from Hugh to Ireland on the subject of his love and struggles for her, and his resolve to raise

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

her again to the glorious position she held as a nation before the irruption of Saxon and Norman spoilers. Granting its derivation, this great poem is as original with Mangan as the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam is with Edward Fitzgerald. Mangan not infrequently rises to a high level of poetic power; and had his strength of character been equal to his poetic gift, his supremacy among Irish poets would not be challenged. His career was a sad and checkered one, misery driving him to drink and drugs. His life was spent in Dublin, where he died. He belongs with Chatterton and Verlaine and the other ill-starred sons of genius.

Dark Rosaleen

O MY Dark Rosaleen,
Do not sigh, do not weep!
The priests are on the ocean green,
They march along the deep.
There's wine from the royal Pope,
Upon the ocean green;
And Spanish ale shall give you hope,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
Shall glad your heart, shall give you hope,
Shall give you health, and help, and hope,
My Dark Rosaleen!

Over hills, and through dales,
Have I roamed for your sake;
All yesterday I sailed with sails
On river and on lake.
The Erne, at its highest flood,
I dashed across unseen,
For there was lightning in my blood,

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

My Dark Rosaleen!

My own Rosaleen!

O, there was lightning in my blood,
Red lightning lightened through my blood,
My Dark Rosaleen!

All day long, in unrest,

To and fro, do I move.

The very soul within my breast

Is wasted for you, Love!

The heart in my bosom faints

To think of you, my Queen,

My life of life, my saint of saints,

My Dark Rosaleen!

My own Rosaleen!

To hear your sweet and sad complaints,

My Life, my Love, my Saint of saints,

My Dark Rosaleen!

Woe and pain, pain and woe,

Are my lot, night and noon,

To see your bright face clouded so,

Like to the mournful moon.

But yet will I rear your throne

Again in golden sheen;

'Tis you shall reign, shall reign alone,

My Dark Rosaleen!

My own Rosaleen!

'Tis you shall have the golden throne,

'Tis you shall reign, and reign alone,

My Dark Rosaleen!

Over dews, over sands,

Will I fly, for your weal:

Your holy delicate white hands

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

Shall girdle me with steel.
At home, in your emerald bowers,
From morning's dawn till e'en,
You'll pray for me, my flower of flowers,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My fond Rosaleen!
You'll think of me through daylight hours,
My virgin flower, my flower of flowers,
My Dark Rosaleen!

I could scale the blue air,
I could plough the high hills,
O, I could kneel all night in prayer,
To heal your many ills!
And one beamy smile from you
Would float like light between
My toils and me, my own, my true,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My fond Rosaleen!
Would give me life and soul anew,
A second life, a soul anew,
My Dark Rosaleen!

O, the Erne shall run red,
With redundance of blood,
The earth shall rock beneath our tread,
And flames wrap hill and wood,
And gun-peal and slogan-cry
Wake many a glen serene,
Ere you shall fade, ere you shall die,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My own Rosaleen!
The Judgement Hour must first be nigh,
Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
My Dark Rosaleen!

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

From "Gone in the Wind"

In his "Treasury of Irish Poetry," Lionel Johnson credits Mangan with the authorship of this threnody, although Mangan himself described it as a translation from the German of Rückert, and it has usually been printed as such. "It has, however, no German original," says Johnson. "The phrase 'gone in the wind' is practically all that it possesses in common with a certain poem of Rückert's, and there the phrase is used differently."

SOLOMON, where is thy throne? It is gone in the
wind.

Babylon, where is thy might? It is gone in the wind.
Like the swift shadows of noon, like the dreams of the
blind,

Vanish the glories and pomps of the earth in the wind.

Man, canst thou build upon aught in the pride of thy
mind?

Wisdom will teach thee that nothing can tarry behind:
Though there be thousand bright actions embalmed and
enshrined,

Myriads and millions of brighter are snow in the wind.

Solomon, where is thy throne? It is gone in the wind.

Babylon, where is thy might? It is gone in the wind.

Happy in death are they only whose hearts have con-
signed

All earth's affections and longings and cares to the
wind.

Pity thou, reader, the madness of poor humankind
Raving of knowledge; (and Satan so busy to blind!)
Raving of glory, like me; for the garlands I bind,
Garlands of song, are but gathered, and strewn in the
wind.

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

Solomon, where is thy throne? It is gone in the wind.
Babylon, where is thy might? It is gone in the wind.
I, Abul-Namez, must rest; for my fire is declined,
And I hear voices from Hades, like bells on the wind.

The Nameless One

ROLL forth, my song, like the rushing river,
That sweeps along to the mighty sea:
God will inspire me while I deliver
My soul of thee!

Tell thou the world, when my bones lie whitening
Amid the last homes of youth and eld,
That once there was one whose veins ran lightning
No eye beheld.

Tell how his boyhood was one drear night-hour,
How shone for him, through his grief and gloom,
No star of all heaven sends to light our
Path to the tomb.

Roll on, my song, and to after ages
Tell how, disdaining all earth can give:
He would have taught men, from wisdom's pages,
The way to live.

And tell how trampled, derided, hated,
And worn by weakness, disease, and wrong,
He fled for shelter to God, who mated
His soul with song—

With song which alway, sublime or vapid,
Flowed like a rill in the morning-beam,
Perchance not deep, but intense and rapid—
A mountain stream.

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

Tell how this Nameless, condemned for years long
To herd with demons from hell beneath,
Saw things that made him, with groans and tears, long
For even death.

Go on to tell how, with genius wasted,
Betrayed in friendship, befooled in love,
With spirit shipwrecked, and young hopes blasted,
He still, still strove;

Till spent with toil, dreeing death for others,
And some whose hands should have wrought for him
(If children live not for sires and mothers)
His mind grew dim;

And he fell far through that pit abysmal,
The gulf and grave of Maginn and Burns,
And pawned his soul for the devil's dismal
Stock of returns;

But yet redeemed it in days of darkness,
And shapes and signs of the final wrath,
When death, in hideous and ghastly starkness,
Stood on his path.

And tell how now, amid wreck and sorrow,
And want, and sickness, and houseless nights,
He bides in calmness the silent morrow,
That no ray lights.

And lives he still, then? Yes! Old and hoary
At thirty-nine, from despair and woe,
He lives, enduring what future story
Will never know.

JAMES CLARENCE MANGAN

Him grant a grave to, ye pitying noble,
Deep in your bosoms: there let him dwell!
He, too, had tears for all souls in trouble
Here, and in hell.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

ENGLAND, 1803-1849

BEDDOES was one of the wild dream-driven spirits touched by the madness of the Muse. His masterpiece is *Death's Jest Book*, a tragedy of the same order as John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfy*. The lyrics in the *Jest Book* and elsewhere are more brilliant than the blank verse. They sometimes recall the Shelleyan and the Shakespearean lyrics; and some of them are touched with a strange mingling of comic and sepulchral light.

Dream-Pedlary

IF there were dreams to sell,
What would you buy?
Some cost a passing bell;
Some a light sigh,
That shakes from Life's fresh crown
Only a rose-leaf down.
If there were dreams to sell,
Merry and sad to tell,
And the crier rang the bell,
What would you buy?

A cottage lone and still,
With bowers nigh,
Shadowy, my woes to still,
Until I die.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

Such pearl from Life's fresh crown
Fain would I shake me down.
Were dreams to have at will,
This would best heal my ill,
 This would I buy.

Wolfram's Song

FROM "DEATH'S JEST BOOK," ACT V.

OLD ADAM, the carrion crow,
The old crow of Cairo;
He sat in the shower, and let it flow
 Under his tail and over his crest;
 And through every feather
 Leaked the wet weather;
And the bough swung under his nest;
For his beak it was heavy with marrow.
 Is that the wind dying? O no;
 It's only two devils, that blow
 Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
 In the ghosts' moonshine.

Ho! Eva, my grey carrion wife,
When we have supped on kings' marrow,
Where shall we drink and make merry our life?
Our nest it is Queen Cleopatra's skull,
 'Tis cloven and cracked,
 And battered and hacked,
But with tears of blue eyes it is full:
Let us drink then, my raven of Cairo.
 Is that the wind dying? O no;
 It is only two devils, that blow
 Through a murderer's bones, to and fro,
 In the ghosts' moonshine.

RICHARD HENRY, OR HENGIST, HORNE

ENGLAND, 1803-1884

HORNE was great as a poet and eccentric as a man. After a youth of adventure, partly in the Mexican naval service, he returned to England and began, in 1828, a highly spectacular literary career in which the publication of *Orion, an Epic Poem* (1843) marked the climax. I agree with Poe, other critics to the contrary, that *Orion* is a very noble poem, whose "defects are trivial and conventional—its beauties intrinsic and supreme."

From "Orion," an Epic Poem

"Orion" is based upon the various loves of this fabled giant hunter, his loves for the goddess Artemis, and for the mortal maidens, Merope and Eos. Purified after labors and suffering, he is at last made immortal, and becomes a constellation.

I agree with Poe when he says: "'Orion' will be admitted by every man of genius, to be one of the noblest, if not the very noblest, poetical work of the age. Its defects are trivial and conventional—its beauties intrinsic and supreme." And let me add that in the quoted passages that follow, Horne rises to a height that is not surpassed even by Milton, singing of darkness and the stars.

Note now how swiftly—in a few brief strokes—the following picture is projected before us:

THE scene in front two sloping mountain sides
Displayed; in shadow one and one in light.
The loftiest on its summit now sustained
The sun-beams, raying like a mighty wheel
Half seen, which left the forward surface dark
In its full breadth of shade; the coming sun

RICHARD HENRY HORNE

Hidden as yet behind; the other mount,
Slanting transverse, swept with an eastward face,
Catching the golden light. Now while the peal
Of the ascending chase told that the rout
Still midway rent the thickets, suddenly
Along the broad and sunny slope appeared
The shadow of a stag that fled across
Followed by a Giant's shadow with a spear.

*And now we come upon Orion's own description of a
palace built by him for Vulcan. Note the lighted thunders
with which the passages close:*

But, ere a shadow-hunter I became—
A dreamer of strange dreams by day and night—
For him I built a palace underground,
Of iron, black and rough as his own hands.
Deep in the groaning, disembowled earth,
The tower-broad pillars and huge stanchions,
And slant supporting wedges I set up,
Aided by the Cyclops who obeyed my voice,
Which through the metal fabric rang and pealed
In orders echoing far, like thunder-dreams.
With arches, galleries and domes all carved—
So that great figures started from the roof
And loftly coignes, or sat and downward gazed
On those who stood below and gazed above—
I filled it; in the center framed a hall:
Central in that, a throne; and for the light,
Forged mighty hammers that should rise and fall
On slanted rocks of granite and of flint,
Worked by a torrent, for whose passage down
A chasm I hewed. And here the God could take,
Midst showery sparks and swathes of broad gold fire,
His lone repose, lulled by the sounds he loved:

RICHARD HENRY HORNE

Or, casting back the hammer-heads till they choked
The water's course, enjoy, if so he wished,
Midnight tremendous, silence, and iron sleep.

And now we come to the hour when Orion, his brethren all dead, is engaged alone in driving the beasts out of Chios. He builds two immense, wide-placed, walls narrowing like a funnel to the sea. He drives the flying herds of animals seaward between these walls. Observe how clear are the details—how vividly picturesque are the incidents. This is master-work:

Two days remain. Orion, in each hand
Waving a torch, his course at night began,
Through wildest haunts and lairs of savage beasts.
With long-drawn howl, before him trooped the wolves—
The panthers, terror-stricken, and the bears
With wonder and gruff rage; from desolate crags,
Leering hyenas, griffin, hippogrif,
Skulked, or sprang madly, as the tossing brands
Flashed through the midnight nooks and hollows cold.
Sudden as fire from flint; o'er crashing thickets,
With crouched head and curled fangs, dashed the wild
 boar,
Gnashing forth on with reckless impulses,
While the clear-purposed fox crept closely down
Into the underwood, to let the storm,
Whate'er its cause, pass over. Through dark fens,
Marshes, green rushy swamps and margins reedy,
Orion held his way—and rolling shapes
Of serpent and of dragon moved before him
With high-reared crests, swan-like yet terrible,
And often looking back with gem-like eyes.

RICHARD HENRY HORNE

All night Orion urged his rapid course
In the vexed rear of the swift-droving din,
And when the dawn had peered, the monsters all
Were hemmed in barriers. These he now o'erheaped
With fuel through the day, and when again
Night darkened, and the sea a gulf-like voice
Sent forth, the barriers at all points he fired,
Mid prayers to Hephaestos and his Ocean-sire.

Soon as the flames had eaten out a gap
In the great barrier fronting the ravine
That ran down to the sea, Orion grasped
Two blazing boughs; one high in air he raised,
The other, with its roaring foliage trailed
Behind him as he sped. Onward the droves
Of frantic creatures with one impulse rolled
Before this night-devouring thing of flames,
With multitudinous voice and downward sweep
Into the sea, which now first knew a tide,
And, ere they made one effort to regain
The shore, had caught them in its flowing arms,
And bore them past all hope. The living mass,
Dark heaving o'er the waves resistlessly,
At length, in distance, seemed a circle small,
Midst which one creature in the center rose,
Conspicuous in the long, red quivering gleams
That from the dying brands streamed o'er the waves.
It was the oldest dragon of the fens,
Whose forty flag-wings and horn-crested head
O'er crags and marshes regal sway had held;
And now he rose up, like an embodied curse,
From all the doomed, fast sinking—some just sunk—
Looked landward o'er the sea, and flapped his vans,
Until Poseidon drew them whirling down.

ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER
ENGLAND, 1804-1875

And Shall Trelawny Die?

A GOOD sword and a trusty hand!
A merry heart and true!
King James's men shall understand
What Cornish lads can do.

And have they fixed the where and when?
And shall Trelawny die?
Here's twenty thousand Cornish men
Will know the reason why!

Out spake their captain brave and bold,
A merry wight was he:
"If London Tower were Michael's hold,
We'll set Trelawny free!

"We'll cross the Tamar, land to land,
The Severn is no stay,
With 'one and all', and hand in hand,
And who shall bid us nay?

"And when we come to London Wall,
A pleasant sight to view,
Come forth! come forth, ye cowards all,
Here's men as good as you.

ROBERT STEPHEN HAWKER

"Trelawny he's in keep and hold,
Trelawny he may die;
But here's twenty thousand Cornish bold
Will know the reason why!"

FRANCIS MAHONY

IRELAND, 1805-1866

The Bells of Shandon

WITH deep affection,
And recollection,
I often think of
Those Shandon bells,
Whose sounds so wild would,
In the days of childhood,
Fling around my cradle
Their magic spells.
On this I ponder
Where'er I wander,
And thus grow fonder,
Sweet Cork, of thee;
With thy bells of Shandon,
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the River Lee.

I've heard bells chiming
Full many a clime in,
Tolling sublime in
Cathedral shrine,
While at a glib rate
Brass tongues would vibrate—

FRANCIS MAHONY

But all their music
 Spoke naught like thine;
For memory, dwelling
On each proud swelling
Of the belfry knelling
 Its bold notes free,
Made the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
 Of the River Lee.

I've heard bells tolling
Old Adrian's Mole in,
Their thunder rolling
 From the Vatican,
And cymbals glorious
Swinging uproarious
In the gorgeous turrets
 Of Notre Dame;
But thy sounds were sweeter
'Than the dome of Peter
Flings o'er the Tiber,
 Pealing solemnly—
O, the bells of Shandon
Sound far more grand on
The pleasant waters
 Of the River Lee.

There's a bell in Moscow,
While on tower and kiosk O!
In Saint Sophia
 The Turkman gets,
And loud in air
Calls men to prayer

FRANCIS MAHONY

From the tapering summits
Of tall minarets.
Such empty phantom
I freely grant them;
But there's an anthem
More dear to me—
'Tis the bells of Shandon,
That sound so grand on
The pleasant waters
Of the River Lee.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

ENGLAND, 1806-1861

THE appearance, in 1841, of *The Cry of the Children* gave a great impetus to the growing fame of Elizabeth Barrett, who was to become the wife of Robert Browning five years later. In 1844 she published two volumes of poems, which comprised *The Drama of Exile*, *Vision of Poets* and *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*. After her marriage appeared the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*—the history of her own love-story, thinly disguised by its title. *Aurora Leigh*, her largest and perhaps the most popular of her longer poems, appeared in 1856.

No more impassioned soul ever found expression in rhythmical speech than Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and there is nothing finer in her poetry than the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Poe found her *Lady Geraldine's Courtship* combining "the fiercest passion with the most ethereal fancy", adding, however, that "we are forced to admit her poem is a palpable imitation of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall*!", which it surpasses in plot or rather in thesis, as much as it falls below it in artistic management and in a certain calm energy—lustrous and indomitable—such as we might imagine in a broad river of molten gold." In 1845, Poe

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

wrote: "That Miss Barrett [Elizabeth Barrett Browning] has done more, in poetry, than any woman, living or dead, will scarcely be questioned—that she has surpassed all her poetical contemporaries of either sex (with a single exception) is our deliberate opinion." This seems to me to be a just judgment. I do not believe that the whole world of poetry contains a more powerful passage than the following from her *Drama of Exile*:

"On a mountain peak
Half sheathed in primal woods and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine, at that hour
A Lion couched, part raised upon his paws
With his calm massive face turned full on mine
And his mane listening. When the ended curse
Left silence in the world, right suddenly
He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,
As if the new reality of Death
Were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce—
(*Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat*
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
Such fast keen *echoes crumbling down the vales*
To distant silence—that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
In savage and in sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges."

We have here a picturesque vigor in the great lines, a vigor that makes us think of Homer in his highest moments.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Sonnets from the Portuguese

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung

A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death," I said. But,
there,
The silver answer rang—"Not Death, but Love."

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore—
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land

Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for Love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently, for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for Love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through Love's eternity.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right:
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Nothing Small

THERE'S nothing great
Nor small," has said a poet of our day,
And truly I reiterate. Nothing's small!
No lily-muffled hum of summer bee
But finds some coupling with the spinning stars:
No pebble at your foot but proves a sphere;
No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim.
Ay, glancing on my own thin-veined wrist,
In such a little tremor of the blood
The whole strong clamor of a vehement soul
Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush a-fire with God;
But only he who sees takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more from the first similitude.

Traveling South toward Italy

FROM "AURORA LEIGH"

I FELT the wind soft from the land of souls;
The old miraculous mountains heaved in sight,
One straining past another along the shore,
The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts,
Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of seas
And stare on voyages. Peak pushing peak
They stood: I watched, beyond that Tyrian belt
Of intense sea betwixt them and the ship,
Down all their sides the misty olive-woods
Dissolving in the weak congenial moon,
And still disclosing some brown convent-tower

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

That seems as if it grew from some brown rock,
Or many a little lighted village, dropped
Like a fallen star upon so high a point,
You wonder what can keep it in its place
From sliding headlong with the waterfalls
Which powder all the myrtle and orange groves
With spray of silver. Thus my Italy
Was stealing on us. Genoa broke with day,
The Doria's long pale palace striking out,
From green hills in advance of the white town,
A marble finger dominant to ships
Seen glimmering through the uncertain gray of dawn.

Man

FROM "AURORA LEIGH"

THE cygnet finds the water, but the man
Is born in ignorance of his element
And feels out blind at first, disorganized
By sin i' the blood—his spirit-insight dulled
And crossed by his sensations. Presently
He feels it quicken in the dark sometimes,
When, mark, be reverent, be obedient,
For such dumb motions of imperfect life
Are oracles of vital Deity
Attesting the Hereafter. Let who says
"The soul's a clean white paper", rather say,
A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph
Defiled, erased and covered by a monk's—
The apocalypse, by a Longus! poring on
Which obscene text, we may discern perhaps
Some fair, fine trace of what was written once,
Some upstroke of an alpha and omega
Expressing the old scripture.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

The Poets

FROM "LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP"

THERE, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud
the poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of
our own;
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle inter-
flowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf
is folded down!
Or at times a modern volume—Wordsworth's solemn-
thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted rev-
erie—
Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut
deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity.

Hiram's Powers's Greek Slave

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
An alien Image with enshackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
To, so, confront man's crimes in different lands
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger!—and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

From God's pure heights of beauty against man's
wrong!

Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs but west—and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

A Musical Instrument

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river;
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

He cut it short, did the great god Pan
 (How tall it stood in the river!)
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
 In holes, as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan
 (Laughed while he sat by the river)
"The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
 He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
 Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
 Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
 To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain—
For the reed which grows nevermore again
 As a reed with the reeds of the river.

The Cry of the Children

Poe says of the following: "This poem is full of a nervous unflinching energy, horror sublime in its simplicity, of which a far greater than Dante might be proud." The poem was suggested by the report of a commission ap-

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

pointed by Parliament to investigate the employment of young children in England, when the employers boasted that now there was "scarce a child of seven but could earn its own living." Parliament was unable to cope with this tragic devastation of childhood. Whereupon this frail woman, then Elizabeth Barrett, in her sick room, read the investigation reports, became incandescent with holy anger, and wrote the poem that threw an awakening light upon the darkened mind of England, and changed the fate of a generation of children.

DO ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their
mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in their sorrow
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost;
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy:

"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak:
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes;
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have:

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do:
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds a-near the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For all day we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or all day we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For all day the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals;
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God, that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?"

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the master,
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children—"up in heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run:
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair without its calm;
Are slaves without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they 'mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath."

EDWARD FITZGERALD

ENGLAND, 1809-1883

FITZGERALD, whose immortal achievement is the so-called translation of *The Rubáiyat of Omar Kháyyám*, was an eccentric man of genius, who took more pains to avoid fame than others do to seek it. He loved with a constant and ardent affection what is great, noble and heroic. His friends included Tennyson, Carlyle and Thackeray. Of the *Rubáiyat*, Swinburne says: "Every quatrain, though it is something so much more than graceful or distinguished or elegant, is also the sublimation of elegance, the apotheosis of distinction, the transfiguration of grace."

It is related that the *Rubáiyat*, published anonymously in 1859, "fell dead from the press." In the course of time a few of the pamphlets were placed by the London publisher on his bargain counter, where a copy was purchased for a penny by a friend of the poet-painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Rossetti, deeply impressed by the work,

EDWARD FITZGERALD

brought it to the attention of Swinburne, whose published eulogy laid the foundation of the Omar cult in England. As the poem is a paraphrase, rather than a translation, I am not, in this work, placing it in the department of translation.

From "The Rubáiyát of Omar Kháyyám"

We come now to one of the few extraordinary long poems written in recent years; for "The Rubáiyát" stands with "Ave Atque Vale," "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" and one or two others of the same lofty order.

"The Rubáiyát" is so free a translation of Omar that it may be called a poem from the pen of Fitzgerald. And how masterly is the construction of the poem—how inevitable are the words, how fresh are the phrases, how ringing are the epigrams!

But I cannot speak so warmly of the philosophy of the poem—of its pessimism, its hedonism, its glorification of pleasure as the chief end of our existence. "We are not here to enjoy ourselves", says Professor Charles Mills Gayley, "but to behave ourselves." Omar assures us that only one thing is certain—death: therefore man's business is to live for the hour—to "take the Cash and let the Credit go"—to drink the cup of pleasure with no thought of the future. Pleasure—important as rational pleasure is—should not be looked on as the high purpose of our days on earth. Pleasure offers us only a "cheap" solution of the meaning of our mortal struggle. There is something higher than pleasure—higher even than happiness—and that higher thing in Blessedness. This is the high satisfaction that descends upon a man when, through self-surrender or other heroic action, he has put self aside and

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performed some difficult duty that confronted him. As Thomas Lake Harris says, there is a sorrow that is richer than the world's joy, and a burden that is easier than its rest.

WAKE! For the Sun who scattered into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heaven, and
strikes
The Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

Before the phantom of False morning died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
"When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshiper outside?"

And as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to solitude retires,
Where the White Hand of Moses on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the ground suspires. . . .

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

Whether at Naishápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

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A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

Some for the Glories of this World; and some.
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.

Think, in this battered caravanserai
Whose portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrá'm, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropped in her lap from some once lovely Head.

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

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Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
To-DAY of past Regret and future Fears:
To-MORROW!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Seven thousand Years.

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time hath pressed,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

And we that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with mine own hand wrought to make it grow;
And this was all the Harvest that I reaped—
“I came like Water, and like Wind I go.”

Up from Earth's Center through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many a knot unravelled by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

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There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I might not see;
 Some little talk awhile of *Me* and *Thee*
There was—and then no more of *Thee* and *Me*.

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through,
 Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

The Revelations of Devout and Learned
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burned,
 Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep,
They told their comrades and to sleep returned.

I sent my Soul through the Invisible
Some letter of that After-life to spell;
 And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered, "I Myself am Heaven and Hell."

Heaven but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow from a Soul on fire
 Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

We are no other than a moving row
Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
 Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checker-board of Nights and Days;
 Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

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The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,
But Here or There, as strikes the Player, goes;
And He that tossed you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for *It*
As impotently moves as you or I.

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sowed the Seed;
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read. . . .

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

What! from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent him dross-allayed—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

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O Thou, who Man of Baser Earth didst make,
And even with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take!

* * * * *

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious vessels were; and some
Listened perhaps, but never talked at all.

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure molded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly make:
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon looked in that all were seeking:
And then they jogged each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

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That even my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air

As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in the World much wrong:

Have drowned my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my reputation for a Song.

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?

And then, and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

And much as Wine has played the Infidel,
And robbed me of my Robe of Honor—Well,

I often wonder what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!

The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, revealed,

To which the fainting Traveler might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,

And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

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Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Remold it nearer to the Heart's desire!

* * * * *

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

And when like her, O Sáki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scattered on the Grass,
And in your joyous errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

ENGLAND, 1809-1892

TENNYSON was the son of a clergyman, and like his brothers (all of them of great physical strength and stature) he began early to write poetry. He was educated mostly at his home at Aldworth, and his literary taste was guided under the care of his sympathetic and learned father. He went to Trinity College, Cambridge, but did not take a degree.

In 1832 he published a book of verse which *Blackwood's* scored as "dismal drivel." Thus rebuked, the young poet went to work to strengthen and perfect his poetic gifts. After ten years of severe study and reading he ventured

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another book, which brought him into visibility as a glowing star in the heaven of English poetry. Here with charm of color, form, and content, were his *Ulysses*, *Morte D'Arthur*, *Locksley Hall*, and others of the high Tennysonian level.

When Wordsworth died, Tennyson was given the laureate wreath. In 1884, after refusing the honor twice, he was made a peer of the realm.

The *Idylls of the King*, on which he worked for half a century, touching the theme in various ways, are based on the old Malory cycle of Arthur and his knights. Every poet writes in terms of his own age, and Tennyson restores that primitive time refined and elevated, expressing in Virgilian finish, sentiments and aspirations of the later day. The underlying theme is the age-old conflict of man confronting sin and judgment. Swinburne speaks of the "exquisite magnificence" of style—delicacy combined with grandeur.

His *In Memoriam*, written in honor of his Cambridge friend Arthur Hallam, is one of the great poetic lamentations of the world—a call of the heart, asking the why and whither of the departure of the beloved. J. C. Squire says this elegy, "not only presents a strong and ageless human feeling, but it also presents the problem of time and eternity in a manner in which it must present itself to many brooding spirits in all generations."

Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* poems, one written sixty years after the other, both purport to reflect the social spirit of their respective periods, although we miss in the later one the fervor, the warm sympathy of the first for the rejected and the disinherited millions of the world.

Whether penned by the inspired artist or by the conscious craftsman, Tennyson's lyrics are perfect of their kind, catching into immortality the evanescent and the unattainable—the fleeting glory of spring, the exaltation of triumphant death. His later lyrics—*The Throstle* and *Crossing the Bar*—are second only to those immortal early ones, *Break, Break, Break*, and *Tears, Idle Tears*.

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Tennyson was preëminently the artist. Still he was alert to the social and scientific prospects widening in his time. In succinct and often final form he stated the problems of the thinkers of his class—the hope, the doubt, the despair—problems touched upon also in different keys by Browning and by Arnold—all of them veering with the many perturbations of the troubled needle of faith.

Carrying on the golden tradition of Keats, Tennyson has an imperishable place in English poetry. To his cradle-gifts of imagination and melody, he adds a noble power of restraint. His work stands as the rose or the crystal, beauty compelled to final forms.

Blow, Bugle, Blow

THE splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O Love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

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Break, Break, Break

BREAK, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But, O, for the touch of a vanished hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

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Tears, Idle Tears

TEARS, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

As, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!

Flower in the Crannied Wall

FLOWER in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but *if* I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

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The Thristle

SUMMER is coming, summer is coming.
I know it, I know it, I know it.
Light again, leaf again, life again, love again,"
Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
Last year you sang it as gladly.
"New, new, new, new!" Is it then so new
That you should carol so madly?

"Love again, song again, nest again, young again,"
Never a prophet so crazy!
And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend—
See, there is hardly a daisy.

"Here again, here, here, here, happy year!"
O warble unhidden, unbidden!
Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
And all the winters are hidden.

Ring Out, Wild Bells

FROM "IN MEMORIAM"

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night—
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

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Ring out the old, ring in the new—
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring in the valiant man and free
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be!

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Sweet and Low

SWEET and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dropping moon and blow,
Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon:
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

O Swallow, Swallow

O SWALLOW, Swallow, flying, flying South,
Fly to her and fall upon her gilded eaves,
And tell her, tell her what I tell to thee.

O tell her, Swallow, that thou knowest each,
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,
And dark and true and tender is the North.

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O Swallow, Swallow, if I could follow, and light
Upon her lattice, I would pipe and trill,
And cheep and twitter twenty million loves.

O were I thou that she might take me in,
And lay me on her bosom, and her heart
Would rock the snowy cradle till I died.

Why lingereth she to clothe her heart with love,
Delaying as the tender ash delays
To clothe herself when all the woods are green?

O tell her, Swallow, that thy brood is flown:
Say to her, I do but wanton in the South,
But in the North long since my nest is made.

O tell her, brief is life but love is long,
And brief the sun of summer in the North,
And brief the moon of beauty in the South.

O Swallow, flying from the golden woods,
Fly to her, and pipe and woo her, and make her mine,
And tell her, tell her, that I follow thee.

Mariana

"MARIANA IN THE MOATED GRANGE."—MEASURE FOR
MEASURE.

WITH blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted one and all.
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the gable-wall
The broken sheds looked sad and strange:

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Uplifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.

She only said, "My life is dreary,

He cometh not," she said;

She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!"

Her tears fell with the dews at even;

Her tears fell ere the dews were dried;

She could not look on the sweet heaven,

Either at morn or eventide,

After the flitting of the bats,

When thickest dark did trance the sky,

She drew her casement-curtain by,

And glanced athwart the glooming flats.

She only said, "The night is dreary,

He cometh not," she said;

She said, "I am, aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!"

Upon the middle of the night,

Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:

The cock sung out an hour ere light:

From the dark fen the oxen's low

Came to her: without hope of change,

In sleep she seemed to walk forlorn,

Till cold winds woke the gray-eyed morn

About the lonely moated grange.

She only said, "The day is dreary,

He cometh not," she said;

She said, "I am aweary, aweary,

I would that I were dead!"

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About a stone-cast from the wall
A sluice with blackened waters slept,
And o'er it many, round and small,
The clustered marish-mosses crept.
Hard by a poplar shook alway,
All silver-green with gnarlèd bark:
For leagues no other tree did mark
The level waste, the rounding gray.
She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway.
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said, "The night is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

All day within the dreamy house,
The doors upon their hinges creaked;
The blue fly sung in the pane; the mouse
Behind the molding wainscot shrieked,
Or from the crevice peered about.
Old faces glimmered through the doors,
Old footsteps trod the upper floors,
Old voices called her from without.

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She only said, "My life is dreary,
He cometh not," she said;
She said, "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wooing wind aloof
The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then said she "I am very weary
He will not come," she said;
She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,
Oh God, that I were dead!"

From "Maud"

COME into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, Night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the roses blown.

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light, and to die.

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All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirred
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

I said to the lily, "There is but one
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play."
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,
"For ever and ever, mine."

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clashed in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake,
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sighed for the dawn and thee.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls.
To the flowers, and be their sun.

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;"
And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthy bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead;
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

I Have Led Her Home

FROM "MAUD"

I

I HAVE led her home, my love, my only friend.
There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on
Calming itself to the long-wished-for end,
Full to the banks, close on the promised good.

II

None like her, none.
Just now the dry-tongued laurels' pattering talk
Seemed her light foot along the garden walk,
And shook my heart to think she comes once more;
But even then I heard her close the door,
The gates of Heaven are closed, and she is gone.

III

There is none like her, none.
Nor will be when our summers have deceased.
O, art thou sighing for Lebanon
In the long breeze that streams to thy delicious East,
Sighing for Lebanon
Dark cedar, though thy limbs have here increased,
Upon a pastoral slope as fair,
And looking to the South, and fed
With honeyed rain and delicate air,
And haunted by the starry head
Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate,

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And made my life a perfumed altar-flame;
And over whom thy darkness must have spread
With such delight as theirs of old, thy great
Forefathers of the thornless garden, there
Shadowing the snow-limbed Eve from whom she came.

IV

Here will I lie, while these long branches sway,
And you fair stars that crown a happy day
Go in and out as if at merry play,
Who am no more so all forlorn,
As when it seemed far better to be born
To labor and the mattock-hardened hand,
Than nursed at ease and brought to understand
A sad astrology, the boundless plan
That makes you tyrants in your iron skies,
Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

V

But now shine on, and what care I,
Who in this stormy gulf have found a pearl
The countercharm of space and hollow sky,
And do accept my madness, and would die
To save from some slight shame one simple girl.

VI

Would die; for sullen-seeming Death may give
More life to Love than is or ever was
In our low world, where yet 'tis sweet to live.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
It seems that I am happy, that to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
A purer sapphire melts into the sea.

VII

Not die; but live a life of truest breath,
And teach true life to fight with mortal wrongs.
O, why should Love, like men in drinking-songs,
Spice his fair banquet with the dust of death?
Make answer, Maud my bliss,
Maud made my Maud by that long loving kiss,
Life of my life, wilt thou not answer this?
"The dusky strand of Death inwoven here
With dear Love's tie, makes Love himself more dear."

VIII

Is that enchanted moan only the swell
Of the long waves that roll in yonder bay?
And hark the clock within, the silver knell
Of twelve sweet hours that past in bridal white,
And died to live, long as my pulses play;
But now by this my love has closed her sight
And given false death her hand, and stolen away
To dreamful wastes where footless fancies dwell
Among the fragments of the golden day.
May nothing there her maiden grace affright!
Dear heart, I feel with thee the drowsy spell.
My bride to be, my evermore delight,
My own heart's heart, my ownest own, farewell;
It is but for a little space I go:
And ye meanwhile far over moor and fell

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Beat to the noiseless music of the night!
Has our whole earth gone nearer to the glow
Of your soft splendors that you look so bright?
I have climbed nearer out of lonely Hell.
Beat, happy stars, timing with things below,
Beat with my heart more blest than heart can tell,
Blest, but for some dark undercurrent woe
That seems to draw—but it shall not be so:
Let all be well, be well.

The Eagle

FRAGMENT

HE clasps the crag with hookèd hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

O That 'twere Possible

O THAT 'twere possible
After long grief and pain
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again! . . .

A shadow flits before me,
Not thou, but like to thee:
Ah, Christ! that it were possible
For one short hour to see
The souls we loved, that they might tell us
What and where they be!

The Lady of Shalott

I

ON either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And through the field the road runs by
 To many-towered Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Through the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to towered Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
 Lady of Shalott."

II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
 To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving through a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes through the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
"I am half sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling through the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often through the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
 As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
 Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces through the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
 She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me!" cried
 The Lady of Shalott.

IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
 Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
 Did she look to Camelot.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Through the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot:
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot;
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
 All the knights at Camelot;
But Lancelot mused a little space,
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in His mercy lend her grace,
 The Lady of Shalott."

The Lotos-Eaters

COURAGE!" he said, and pointed toward the
land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemèd always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some through wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumberous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land: far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of agèd snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

The charmèd sunset lingered low adown
In the red West: through mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far, far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Father-land,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
And all at once they sang, "Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

Song of the Lotos-Eaters

THERE is sweet music here that softer falls
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
 Or night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
 Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful
 skies.

Here are cool mosses deep,
 And through the moss the ivies creep,
 And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
 And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
 And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
 While all things else have rest from weariness?
 All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
 We only toil, who are the first of things,
 And make perpetual moan,
 Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
 Nor ever fold our wings,
 And cease from wanderings,
 Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
 Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
 "There is no joy but calm!"—
 Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
 The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
 With winds upon the branch, and there
 Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
 Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

But, propped on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropped eyelids still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

From cave to cave through the thick-twinèd vine—
To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Through many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
Through every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust
is blown.

We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge
was seething free,

Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-foun-
tains in the sea.

Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
curled

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming
world:

Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps
and fiery sands,

Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships,
and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song

Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of
wrong,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Like a tale of little meaning though the words are
strong;

Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,

Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
'Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered—
down in Hell

Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.

Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and
oar:

O rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

Ulysses

IT little profits that an idle king
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart:
Much have I seen and known—cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with
me—

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

From "In Memoriam"

A. H. H. OBIT MDCCCXXXIII ¹

STRONG Son of God, immortal Love,
Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
Believing where we cannot prove:

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest Life in man and brute;
Thou madest Death; and lo, thy foot
Is on the skull which thou hast made.

Thou wilt not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why,
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him; thou art just.

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.
Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine.

Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be;
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

We have but faith: we cannot know,
For knowledge is of things we see;
And yet we trust it comes from thee,
A beam in darkness: let it grow.

¹ Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's closest friend, and betrothed to Tennyson's sister Emily, died at Vienna, September 15, 1833.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell;
That mind and soul, according well,
May make one music as before,

But vaster. We are fools and slight;
We mock thee when we do not fear:
But help thy foolish ones to bear;
Help thy vain worlds to bear thy light.

Forgive what seemed my sin in me,
What seemed my worth since I began;
For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O Lord, to thee.

Forgive my grief for one removed,
Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
I trust he lives in thee, and there
I find him worthier to be loved.

Forgive these wild and wandering cries,
Confusions of a wasted youth;
Forgive them where they fail in truth,
And in thy wisdom make me wise.

* * * * *

DARK house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
Sailest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favorable speed
Ruffle thy mirrored mast, and lead
Through prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, through early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfettered by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope through darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

"So careful of the type?" but no.
From scarpèd cliff and quarried stone
She cries, "A thousand types are gone;
I care for nothing, all shall go.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

"Thou makest thine appeal to me:
I bring to life, I bring to death;
The spirit does but mean the breath:
I know no more." And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seemed so fair,
Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
Who rolled the psalm to wintry skies,
Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
And love Creation's final law—
Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieked against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music matched with him.

O life as futile, then, as frail!
O for thy voice to soothe and bless!
What hope of answer, or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil.

This truth came borne with bier and pall,
I felt it, when I sorrowed most,
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all—

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

O true in word, and tried in deed,
Demanding, so to bring relief
To this which is our common grief,
What kind of life is that I lead;

And whether trust in things above
Be dimmed of sorrow, or sustained;
And whether love for him have drained
My capabilities of love;

Your words have virtue such as draws
A faithful answer from the breast,
Through light reproaches, half expressed,
And loyal unto kindly laws.

My blood an even tenor kept,
Till on mine ear this message falls,
That in Vienna's fatal walls
God's finger touched him, and he slept.

The great Intelligences fair
That range above our mortal state,
In circle round the blessed gate,
Received and gave him welcome there;

And led him through the blissful climes,
And showed him in the fountain fresh
All knowledge that the sons of flesh
Shall gather in the cycled times.

But I remained, whose hopes were dim,
Whose life, whose thoughts were little worth,
To wander on a darkened earth,
Where all things round me breathed of him.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

O friendship, equal-poised control,
O heart, with kindest motion warm,
O sacred essence, other form,
O solemn ghost, O crownèd soul!

Yet none could better know than I,
How much of act at human hands
The sense of human will demands
By which we dare to live or die.

Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, though left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine;

A life that all the Muses decked
With gifts of grace, that might express
All-comprehensive tenderness,
All-subtilizing intellect:

And so my passion hath not swerved
To works of weakness, but I find
An image comforting the mind,
And in my grief a strength reserved.

Likewise the imaginative woe,
That loved to handle spiritual strife,
Diffused the shock through all my life,
But in the present broke the blow.

My pulses therefore beat again
For other friends that once I met;
Nor can it suit me to forget
The mighty hopes that make us men.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

I woo your love; I count it crime
To mourn for any overmuch;
I, the divided half of such
A friendship as had mastered Time.

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, though with might
To scale the heaven's highest height.
Or dive below the wells of death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

The churl in spirit, up or down
Along the scale of ranks, through all,
To him who grasps a golden ball,
By blood a king, at heart a clown—

The churl in spirit, howe'er he veil
His want in forms for fashion's sake,
Will let his coltish nature break
At seasons through the gilded pale;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

For who can always act? but he,
 To whom a thousand memories call,
 Not being less but more than all
The gentleness he seemed to be,

Best seemed the thing he was, and joined
 Each office of the social hour
 To noble manners, as the flower
And native growth of noble mind;

Nor ever narrowness or spite,
 Or villain fancy fleeting by,
 Drew in the expression of an eye
Where God and Nature met in light;

And thus he bore without abuse
 The grand old name of gentleman,
 Defamed by every charlatan,
And soiled with all ignoble use.

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
 Now burgeons every maze of quick
 About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow.

Now rings the woodland loud and long,
 The distance takes a lovelier hue,
 And drowned in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
 The flocks are whiter down the vale,
 And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too, and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crowned with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipped in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true;
For though my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thing farewell.

That which we dare invoke to bless;
Our dearest faith; our ghastliest doubt;
He, they, One, All; within, without;
The Power in darkness whom we guess—

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye,
Nor through the questions men may try,
The petty cobwebs we have spun.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

If e'er when faith had fallen asleep,
I heard a voice, "believe no more,"
And heard an ever-breaking shore
That tumbled in the Godless deep,

A warmth within the breast would melt
The freezing reason's colder part,
And like a man in wrath the heart
Stood up and answered, "I have felt."

No, like a child in doubt and fear;
But that blind clamor made me wise;
Then was I as a child that cries,
But, crying, knows his father near;

And what I am beheld again
What is, and no man understands;
And out of darkness came the hands
That reach through nature, molding men.

What ever I have said or sung,
Some bitter notes my harp would give,
Yea, though there often seemed to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet hope had never lost her youth,
She did but look through dimmer eyes;
Or Love but played with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fixed in truth;

And if the song were full of care,
He breathed the spirit of the song,
And if the words were sweet and strong
He set his royal signet there. . . .

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Love is and was my Lord and King,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my King and Lord,
And will be, though as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

Albert the Good

FROM DEDICATION TO "IDYLLS OF THE KING"

WE know him now: all narrow jealousies
Are silent; and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all-accomplished, wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly;
Not swaying to this faction or to that;
Not making his high place the lawless perch
Of winged ambitions, nor a vantage-ground
For pleasure; but through all this tract of years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless life,
Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a throne,
And blackens every blot.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Morte D'Arthur

SO all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made—
Though Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten through the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten through the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stepped
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth work
Of subtlest jewelry. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw; but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:

"Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen, or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:

"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:

"Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
The fæalty, nor like a noble knight;
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time

Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,

Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost forever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded king.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights.
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipped the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the king.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out; what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not though I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded through his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him through the place of tombs.

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the king,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the king, and wept.
But she that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing East;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parched with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So liked a shattered column lay the king;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

With these thou seëst—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.”

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

Opening of the “Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington”

This ode never seemed to me to rise in idea to the lofty levels; so I give only the opening stanzas, merely to show the noble music of the lines.

I

BURY the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation;
Let us bury the Great Duke

To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation;
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

Sir Galahad

Sir Galahad is the most upright of all the Knights of the Round Table. Tennyson intends that the strong lines of the poem should also proclaim the rune of destiny:

*"My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure."*

MY good blade carves the casques of men,
My tough lance thrusteth sure:
My strength is as the strength of ten,
Because my heart is pure.
The shattering trumpet shrilleth high,
The hard brands shiver on the steel,
The splintered spear-shafts crack and fly,
The horse and rider reel:
They reel, they roll in clanging lists,
And when the tide of combat stands,
Perfume and flowers fall in showers,
That lightly rain from ladies' hands.

How sweet are looks that ladies bend
On whom their favors fall!
For them I battle till the end,
To save from shame and thrall;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

But all my heart is drawn above,
My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine:
I never felt the kiss of love,
Nor maiden's hand in mine.
More bounteous aspects on me beam,
Me mightier transports move and thrill;
So keep I fair through faith and prayer
A virgin heart in work and will.

When down the stormy crescent goes,
A light before me swims;
Between dark stems the forest glows,
I hear a noise of hymns:
Then by some secret shrine I ride:
I hear a voice, but none are there;
The stalls are void, the doors are wide,
The tapers burning fair.
Fair gleams the snowy altar-cloth,
The silver vessels sparkle clean,
The shrill bell rings, the censer swings,
And solemn chaunts resound between.

Sometimes on lonely mountain-meres
I find a magic bark;
I leap on board, no helmsman steers,
I float till all is dark.
A gentle sound, an awful light!
Three angels bear the holy Grail:
With folded feet, in stoles of white,
On sleeping wings they sail.
Ah, blessèd vision! blood of God!
My spirit beats her mortal bars,
As down dark tides the glory slides,
And star-like mingles with the stars.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

When on my goodly charger borne
Through dreaming towns I go,
The cock crows ere the Christmas morn,
The streets are dumb with snow.
The tempest crackles on the leads,
And, ringing, springs from brand and mail;
But o'er the dark a glory spreads,
And gilds the driving hail.
I leave the plain, I climb the height;
No branchy thicket shelter yields;
But blessèd forms in whistling storms
Fly o'er waste fens and windy fields.

A maiden knight—to me is given
Such hope, I know not fear:
I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
That often meet me here.
I muse on joy that will not cease,
Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
Pure lilies of eternal peace,
Whose odors haunt my dreams;
And, stricken by an angel's hand,
This mortal armor that I wear,
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,
Are touched, are turned to finest air.

The clouds are broken in the sky,
And through the mountain-walls
A rolling organ-harmony
Swells up, and shakes and falls.
Then move the trees, the copses nod,
Wings flutter, voices hover clear:

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

"O just and faithful knight of God!

Ride on! the prize is near."

So pass I hostel, hall and grange;

By bridge and ford, by park and pale,

All-armed I ride, whate'er betide,

Until I find the holy Grail.

Locksley Hall

COMRADES, leave me here a little, while as yet
'tis early morn:

Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the
bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews
call,

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley
Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy
tracts,

And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went
to rest,

Did I look on great Orion sloping slowly to the West.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising through the
mellow shade,

Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver
braid.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth
sublime

With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of
time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land
reposed;

When I clung to all the present for the promise that
it closed;

When I dipped into the future far as human eye could
see,

Saw the Vision of the world and all the wonder that
would be.

In the Spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's
breast;

In the Spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another
crest;

In the Spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished
dove;

In the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to
thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be
for one so young,

And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance
hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the
truth to me,

Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to
thee."

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and
a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern
night.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden
storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should
do me wrong";
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have
loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his
glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden
sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the
chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, past in music
out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the
copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fulness
of the Spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately
ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of
the lips.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no
more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren
shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs
have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish
tongue.

Is it well to wish thee happy? having known me—to
decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart
than mine!

Yet it shall be: thou shalt lower to his level day by
day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize
with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is: thou art mated with a
clown,
And the grossness of his nature will have weight to
drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent
its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than
his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy: think not they are
glazed with wine.
Go to him: it is thy duty: kiss him: take his hand in
thine.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is over-
wrought;

Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy
lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to under-
stand—

Better thou wert dead before me, though I slew
thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's
disgrace,

Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last
embrace.

Cursèd be the social wants that sin against the strength
of youth!

Cursèd be the social lies that warp us from the living
truth!

Cursèd be the sickly forms that err from honest
Nature's rule!

Cursèd be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of
the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou less
unworthy proved—

Would to God—or I had loved thee more than ever
wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears
but bitter fruit?

I will pluck it from my bosom, though my heart be
at the root.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Never, though my mortal summers to such length of
years should come
As the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging
rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the
mind?
Can I part her from myself, and love her, as I knew
her, kind?

I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak
and move;
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to
love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love
she bore?
No—she never loved me truly: love is love for ever-
more.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils; this is truth the
poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering hap-
pier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart
be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on
the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring
at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows
rise and fall.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his
drunken sleep,
To thy widowed marriage-pillows, to the tears that
thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by
the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine
ears;

An eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy
pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy
rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice
will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy trouble
dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings
thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's
breast.

Oh, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not
his due.
Half is thine and half is his; it will be worthy of the
two.

Oh, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a
daughter's heart.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself
was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffered!"—Perish in thy self-
contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should
I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon
days like these?
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden
keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets
overflow.
I have but an angry fancy: what is that which I
should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's
ground,
When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds are
laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor
feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each
other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier
page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous
Mother-Age!

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before
the strife,

When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of
my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years
would yield,

Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's
field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer
drawn,

Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary
dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him
then,

Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs
of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping
something new;

That which they have done but earnest of the things
that they shall do.

For I dipped into the future, far as human eye could
see,

Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that
would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic
sails,

Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly
bales;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a
ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central
blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the southwind
rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging through the
thunder-storm;

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle-
flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful
realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapped in universal
law.

So I triumphed ere my passion sweeping through me left
me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the
jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out
of joint:
Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from
point to point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping
nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-
dying fire.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose
runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process
of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his
youthful joys,
Though the deep heart of existence beat for ever like
a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger
on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more
and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a
laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of
his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the
bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for
their scorn:

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moldered
string?
I am shamed through all my nature to have loved so
slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleas-
ure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shal-
lower brain:

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched
with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto
wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for
some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began
to beat,

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-
starred:
I was left, a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's
ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far
away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the
day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy
skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots
of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European
flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the
trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy-
fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purpled spheres
of sea.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in
this march of mind,

In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that
shake mankind.

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope
and breathing space;

I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my
dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and they
shall run,

Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances
in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows
of the brooks,

Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable
books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words
are wild,

But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Chris-
tian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious
gains,

Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with
lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun
or clime?

I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of
time—

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

I that rather held it better men should perish one
by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's
moon in Ajalon!

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward
let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing
grooves of change.

Through the shadow of the globe we sweep into the
younger day:
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.

Mother-Age—for mine I knew not—help me as when
life begun:
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings,
weigh the Sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not
set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well through all my fancy
yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley
Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the
roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapor from the margin, blackening over heath
and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunder-
bolt.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire
or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and
I go.

Rizpah

17—

WAILING, wailing, wailing, the wind over land
and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother, come out
to me!"
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that
I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the full moon
stares at the snow.

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out
of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing
over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the
creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself
drenched with the rain.

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to
fall?
I have taken them home, I have numbered the bones,
I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you*? do you come
as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so
must it lie.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what
have you heard?

Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a
word.

Oh—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their
spies—

But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to
darken my eyes.

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you*
know of the night,

The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost
and the fright?

I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only
made for the day.

I have gathered my baby together—and now you may
go your way.

Nay—for it's kind of you, Madam, to sit by an old
dying wife.

But say nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour
of life.

I kissed my boy in the prison, before he went out
to die.

"They dared me to do it," he said, and he never has
told me a lie.

I whipped him for robbing an orchard once when he was
but a child—

"The farmer dared me to do it," he said; he was always
so wild—

And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never
could rest.

The King should have made him a soldier, he would
have been one of his best.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never
would let him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he
swore that he would;
And he took no life, but he took one purse, and
when all was done
He flung it among his fellows—"I'll none of it," said
my son.

I came into court to the Judge and the lawyers. I told
them my tale,
God's own truth—but they killed him, they killed him
for robbing the mail.
They hanged him in chains for a show—we had always
borne a good name—
To be hanged for a thief—and then put away—isn't
that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set
him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at him,
passing by.
God'll pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls
of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who killed him
and hanged him there.

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my
last good bye;
They had fastened the door of his cell. "O mother!"
I heard him cry.
I couldn't get back though I tried, he had something
further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me
away.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that
was dead,

They seized me and shut me up: they fastened me
down on my bed.

"Mother, O mother!"—he called in the dark to me
year after year—

They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that
I couldn't but hear;

And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid
and still

They let me abroad again—but the creatures had
worked their will.

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was
left—

I stole them all from the lawyers—and you will you
call it a theft?—

My baby, the bones that had sucked me, the bones that
had laughed and had cried—

Theirs? Oh, no! they are mine—not theirs—they had
moved in my side.

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kissed 'em,
I buried 'em all—

I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the church-
yard wall.

My Willy'll rise up whole when the trumpet of judg-
ment'll sound;

But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy
ground.

'They would scratch him up—they would hang him
again on the cursèd tree.

Sin? Oh yes, we are sinners, I know—let all that be,

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's good-will
toward men—

"Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord"—let me
hear it again;

"Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering." Yes,
Oh yes!

For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Saviour lives
but to bless.

He'll never put on the black cap except for the worst
of the worst,

And the first may be last—I have heard it in church
—and the last may be first.

Suffering—Oh, long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must
know,

Year after year in the mist and the wind and the
shower and the snow.

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never
repented his sin.

How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you*
of his kin?

Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the
downs began,

The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that 'ill
moan like a man?

Election, Election, and Reprobation—it's all very well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him
in Hell.

For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has
looked into my care,

And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy, I
know not where.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your
desire—

Do you think that I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone
to the fire?

I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may
leave me alone—

You never have borne a child—you are just as hard
as a stone.

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean
to be kind,

But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice is
in the wind—

The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call
in the dark,

And he calls to me now from the church and not from
the gibbet—for hark!

Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking
the walls—

Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good night, I am
going. He calls.

Woman and Man

FROM "THE PRINCESS"

THE woman's cause is man's: they rise or sink
Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free.

* * * * *

For woman is not undeveloped man
But diverse: could we make her as the man,
Sweet Love were slain: his dearest bond is this,
Not like to like, but like in difference.
Yet in the long years liker must they grow;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

The man be more of woman, she of man;
He gain in sweetness and in moral height,
Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world;
She mental breadth, nor fail in childward care,
Nor lose the childlike in the larger mind;
Till at the last she set herself to man,
Like perfect music into noble words.

Vastness

MANY a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after
many a vanished face,
Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust
of a vanished race.

Raving politics, never at rest—as this poor earth's pale
history runs—
What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a
million million of suns?

Lies upon this side, lies upon that side, truthless vio-
lence mourned by the wise,
Thousands of voices drowning his own in a popular
torrent of lies upon lies;

Stately purposes, valor in battle, glorious annals of
army and fleet,
Death for the right cause, death for the wrong cause,
trumpets of victory, groans of defeat;

Innocence seethed in her mother's milk, and Charity
setting the martyr aflame;
Thralldom who walks with the banner of Freedom, and
recks not to ruin a realm in her name.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the gloom of
doubts that darken the schools;
Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand, followed
up by her vassal legion of fools;

Trade flying over a thousand seas with her spice and
her vintage, her silk and her corn;
Desolate offing, sailorless harbors, famishing populace,
wharves forlorn;

Star of the morning, Hope in the sunrise; gloom of
the evening, Life at a close;
Pleasure who flaunts on her wide downway with her
flying robe and her poisoned rose;

Pain that has crawled from the corpse of Pleasure, a
worm which writhes all day, and at night
Stirs up again in the heart of the sleeper, and stings him
back to the curse of the light;

Wealth with his wines and his wedded harlots; honest
Poverty, bare to the bone;
Opulent Avarice, lean as Poverty; Flattery gilding the
rift in a throne;

Fame blowing out from her golden trumpet a jubilant
challenge to Time and to Fate;
Slander, her shadow, sowing the nettle on all the
laurelled graves of the great;

Love for the maiden, crowned with marriage, no regrets
for aught that has been,
Household happiness, gracious children, debtless compe-
tence, golden mean;

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

National hatreds of whole generations, and pigmy spites
of the village spire;

Vows that will last to the last death-ruckle, and vows
that are snapt in a moment of fire;

He that has lived for the lust of the minute, and died
in the doing it, flesh without mind;

He that has nailed all flesh to the Cross, till Self died
out in the love of his kind;

Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter, and all
these old revolutions of earth;

All new-old revolutions of Empire—change of the tide
—what is all of it worth?

What the philosophies, all the sciences, poesy, varying
voices of prayer,

All that is noblest, all that is basest, all that is filthy
with all that is fair?

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own
corpse-coffins at last?

Swallowed in Vastness, lost in Silence, drowned in the
deeps of a meaningless Past?

What but a murmur of gnats in the gloom, or a mo-
ment's anger of bees in their hive?—

* * * * *

Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him for ever:
the dead are not dead but alive.

The Higher Pantheism

THE sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and
the plains—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He, though He be not that which He
seems?

Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in
dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why,
For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel
"I am I"?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy
doom,
Making Him broken gleams and a stifled splendor and
gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with
Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and
feet.

God is law, say the wise; O soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all, says the fool,
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in
a pool.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?

The Silent Voices

WHEN the dumb Hour, clothed in black,
Brings the Dreams about my bed,
Call me not so often back,
Silent Voices of the dead,
Toward the lowland ways behind me,
And the sunlight that is gone!
Call me rather, silent voices,
Forward to the starry track
Glimmering up the heights beyond me
On, and always on!

Crossing the Bar

Recounting the fact that this valedictory poem was written in Tennyson's eighty-first year, his son and biographer states: "I said, 'That is the crown of your life's work'; he [Tennyson] answered, 'It came in a moment.' He explained the 'Pilot' as 'That Divine and Unseen Who is always guiding us.' A few days before his death he said to me: 'Mind you put "Crossing the Bar" at the end of all editions of my poems.'"

This death-song stands in vivid contrast with "Prospice", the more militant death-song of Browning. Tennyson's is soft and serene in tone, speaking the pacific spirit of the man; while Browning's is tempestuous in tone, speaking the battling spirit of the man who is "ever a fighter."

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

SUNSET and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, 19TH CENTURY

To a Skeleton

The manuscript of this poem, which appeared during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, was said to have been found in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, in London, near a perfect human skeleton, and to have been sent by the curator to the "Morning Chronicle" for publication. It excited so much attention that every effort was made to discover the author, and a responsible party went so far as to offer a reward of fifty guineas for information that would discover its origin. The author preserved his "incognito", and I believe that he has never been discovered.

BEHOLD this ruin! 'Twas a skull
Once of ethereal spirit full.
This narrow cell was Life's retreat:
This space was Thought's mysterious seat.
What beauteous visions filled this spot!
What dreams of pleasure long forgot!
Nor hope, nor joy, nor love, nor fear
Have left one trace of record here.

Beneath this moldering canopy
Once shone the bright and busy eye;
But start not at the dismal void.
If social love that eye employed,
If with no lawless fire it gleamed,

ANONYMOUS

But through the dews of kindness beamed,
That eye shall be forever bright
When stars and sun are sunk in night.

Within this hollow cavern hung
The ready, swift and tuneful tongue.
If Falsehood's honey it disdained,
And when it could not praise was chained;
If bold in Virtue's cause it spoke,
Yet gentle concord never broke,
This silent tongue shall plead for thee
When Time unveils Eternity!

SIR FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE

ENGLAND, 1810-1888

EDUCATED at Eton and Oxford, he held the post of receiver-general and next of commissioner of customs, and in 1867 was elected to the chair of poetry in Oxford University, which he filled for a decade. This selection is taken from Doyle's most representative volume, *The Guards and Other Poems*.

The Private of the Buffs; or, the British Soldier in China

(1857)

LAST night, among his fellow roughs,
He jested, quaffed and swore,
A drunken private of the Buffs,
Who never looked before.
To-day, beneath the foeman's frown,
He stands in Elgin's place,
Ambassador from Britain's crown,
And type of all her race.

Poor, reckless, rude, low-born, untaught,
Bewildered and alone,
A heart, with English instinct fraught,
He yet can call his own.
Ay, tear his body limb from limb,
Bring cord, or axe, or flame,
He only knows that not through him
Shall England come to shame.

1881

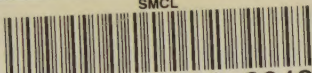
SIR FRANCIS HASTINGS DOYLE

Far Kentish hop-fields round him seemed,
Like dreams, to come and go,
Bright leagues of cherry-blossom gleamed,
One sheet of living snow;
The smoke above his father's door
In gray soft eddyings hung;
Must he then watch it rise no more,
Doomed by himself, so young?

Yes, honor calls!—with strength like steel
He put the vision by;
Let dusky Indians whine and kneel,
An English lad must die.
And thus, with eyes that would not shrink,
With knee to man unbent,
Unflinching on its dreadful brink,
To his red grave he went.

Vain, mightiest fleets of iron framed,
Vain, those all-shattering guns,
Unless proud England keep, untamed,
The strong heart of her sons;
So let his name through Europe ring—
A man of mean estate,
Who died, as firm as Sparta's king,
Because his soul was great.

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